

**IMPLEMENTING STATE EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN IOWA:
VOICES FROM THE FIELD**

**A Dissertation
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IMPLEMENTING STATE EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN IOWA: VOICES FROM THE FIELD

An Abstract of a Dissertation by
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The problem: The problem of this qualitative policy implementation study was to describe and analyze what implementers understood as the intent of Iowa's Accountability for Student Learning Act as well as the processes and strategies used by small public school districts to implement this policy. This study also sought recommendations from implementers regarding improved design for future educational policy.

Procedures: In-depth, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 teachers and administrators in three small, rural K-12 Iowa districts actively implementing HF 2272. Interview data were transcribed, coding schemes developed, and the constant comparative method was used to categorize data. Field notes and districts' relevant documents were reviewed. Data were analyzed by first developing a site report for each district. The researcher then looked across the site reports for themes. Discussion of the findings includes a consideration of the literature on accountability, standards-based reform, and policy implementation.

Findings: 1) 2272 did not impact community relations, 2) the perceived intent was increased accountability to raise student achievement, 3) districts increased their use of data, 4) districts developed more formal assessment systems, 5) barriers included lack of time, unclear policy expectations, and the external nature of the mandate, 6) supports included their AEA and a culture of professional development and distributed leadership, 7) unintended consequences included increased educator workloads, increased stress levels, and a sense of losing local control, and 8) educators recommended policymakers involve them in policy decisions.

Conclusions: 1) active districts' culture/infrastructure assisted in implementation, 2) voluminous public reporting does not increase community engagement, 3) state and legislative consideration of implementation was lacking, 4) AEAs were crucial in capacity building, and 5) implementation was an intense, stressful, and not always productive process.

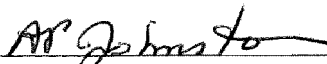
Recommendations: 1) support Iowa's AEAs, 2) design flexible policy, 3) build capacity, 4) learn about policy instruments, and 5) involve educators in decisions that affect them.

Implementing State Educational Policy in Iowa: Voices from the Field

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May 2003

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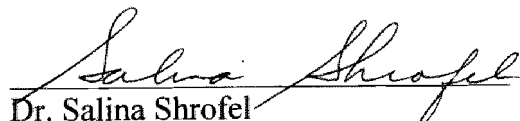

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

When studying educational policy and accompanying standards-based reforms, recent history always seems to begin in 1983 with the publication of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform. Highlighting the less-than-stellar student achievement in the United States, the report stimulated policy development around standards at state and local levels. These standards-based reforms intend to tie central features of policy such as curriculum, assessment, teacher education, and professional development, around policy level statements of what students should know and be able to do (Fuhrman, 2001). As a result, educators across the nation are embroiled in the midst of standard setting, assessing, and reporting as required by policies affecting them. Iowa is a little different.

As the last remaining stalwart, Iowa is the only state in the nation not to have mandated state-level content standards for each of its 371 districts. Instead, the Iowa legislature passed the Accountability for Student Learning Act in 1998 (House File 2272), which requires that each district develop local standards for each subject area and report achievement on them, with particular emphasis on reading, math, and science.

As many educators in Iowa and across the country have realized, legislatively requiring districts to engage in standards-based reform efforts and successfully implementing reform are two very different things. While implementing policy at any level can be fraught with difficulty, the task becomes even more daunting when trying to implement someone else's idea. When that "someone" is a group of well-intentioned

members of the state legislature, implementation of educational policy becomes a field of study in and of itself.

One clear conclusion runs through the policy implementation research: “it is incredibly hard to make something happen, most especially across layers of governments and institutions” (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 172). Since the early 1970s, researchers have sought to understand why this is so. As Van Horn and Van Meter stated in 1976, the central purpose of analyzing policy implementation “is to derive explanations from the events and factors that intervene between the articulation...and the results” (p. 104). They continue to explain:

The policy implementation model aspires to discover how the law is implemented. It allows one to chart variations and relate them to outcomes. The end product is no concise formula that can be employed to explain (in any strict sense) the observed results; rather it can be used to abstract a better understanding of the process and of those factors that facilitate or hinder performance. (Van Horn & Van Meter, 1976, p. 117)

This descriptive policy implementation study of Iowa’s educational “accountability law” intends to do just that.

Statement of the Problem

Iowa educators know all too well the difficulty in implementing state educational policy. Following the national trend towards increased accountability for student achievement, they were required to implement House File 2272, the Accountability for Student Learning Act, enacted in 1998. While more legislation looms on the horizon, educators are now fully involved in the implementation of this legislative mandate. The problem of this study, therefore, was to describe and analyze what implementers understood as the intent of HF 2272 as well as the processes and strategies used by small public school districts in Iowa to implement this policy. In addition, this study sought

recommendations from implementers regarding improved design for future educational policy.

Research Questions

The research questions provide this study with boundaries for investigation. More specifically, the research questions provide the foundation for the interview process. In this qualitative study, the research questions were purposefully designed to be open-ended to allow participants to tell their district's "story" of implementing Iowa's educational accountability law, House File 2272. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How did House File 2272 impact three small, rural Iowa districts?
2. What did local implementers describe as supports and barriers to implementing House File 2272?
3. What did local implementers think that the legislature intended for House File 2272 to accomplish?
4. What do educators in small districts offer as recommendations for future policy design and implementation procedures?

Purpose of the Study

It was the hope of this researcher to give voice to practitioners in small, rural Iowa districts while gaining insight into how legislative mandates were being carried out in those districts. Findings of this study should be of interest to K-12 administrators, teachers, school board members, and other policy influentials throughout the state and nation as they reveal attitudes, knowledge, skills, and processes useful in future

implementation of state policy. It should be of particular interest to legislators in considering the design of future education policy with implementation in mind.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of this study are inherent in the research design as well as in its implementation. The reader must consider these delimitations if attempts are made to apply the findings of this study to other contexts.

School districts chosen for this study were not intended to be a random selection, nor were they intended to represent all small, rural school districts in Iowa. However, descriptions of the districts in this study are provided to encourage the reader to make his or her own judgment about how the results may be skewed or well represented by the sites selected. Additionally, only individuals familiar with school improvement efforts were chosen to be interviewed. This delimitation is exactly as Malen, Croninger, Muncey, and Redmond-Jones (2002) described in their study:

While the individuals we interviewed were in the best possible position to know how the reform was actually unfolding in the schools, their perceptions are not necessarily representative of the broader school community....We cannot be fully confident that we got the "whole story". (p. 116)

As the only interviewer and primary instrument for data collection in this study, the researcher is aware that she impacted this study by bringing her own inherent biases to it as she made meaning of the information gathered during the data analysis. The researcher may also have affected the data collection by the way she acted, questioned, and responded during the interviews, as the researcher's behavior shaped the relationship and, therefore, the ways participants responded and gave accounts of their experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Finally, it was assumed that study participants were candid and truthful in their responses to the interview questions.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to provide clarity and promote the reader's understanding of this study.

1. Active user – those districts that “latched onto new state initiatives and went beyond them” (Odden, 1991, p. 10); those districts that had a “tendency to get out ahead of the new state reforms in a way that distinguishes them from their peers” (Odden, 1991, p. 210).
2. Annual Progress Report (APR) – to be filed with the Iowa Department of Education by September 15th of each year, the APR contains a checklist of requirements to be shared with community members annually. Requirements include disaggregated student achievement levels in reading and math at grades 4, 8, and 11, science at grades 8 and 11, and additional “state indicators,” including drop-out rate and percentage of students scoring above 20 on the ACT, among others.
3. Area Education Agency (AEA) – there are currently 14 of these intermediate regional service units in Iowa.
4. Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) – required to be submitted to the Iowa Department of Education and outlines a district's Annual Improvement Goals, Long Range Goals, and Action Plans to meet those goals. Description of the use of different funding streams, the district's mission and vision, the district's reading and math standards, and the district wide assessment system are also included.
5. Design Team – an internal school district committee generally composed of teachers, administrators, and an Area Education Agency representative; support

staff, students, and community members may also be represented on the Design Team.

6. House File 2272 – also known as the Accountability for Student Learning Act, enacted in Iowa in 1998; commonly referred to as Iowa’s “accountability law.”
7. Rural/small – districts with a K-12 student enrollment of less than 750.
8. School Improvement Advisory Committee/District Advisory Committee – an external district committee generally composed of community members, an Area Education Agency representative, teachers, and administrators.

Research Note

This policy implementation study was one of seven studies conducted through Drake University which explored Iowa’s 1998 state education accountability policy, House File 2272. These studies were supported in part by funds received from FINE: First in the Nation in Education - Iowa’s Educational Research Foundation. They were intended to inform policy makers about how their policy initiatives impact local teachers and administrators in a wide range of schools and school districts. What all schools and districts had in common was that 1) they had to implement the policy and 2) they all had a reputation for having planned for school improvement prior to the law having been passed. Taken together, it was hoped that these studies would provide insight into how the state might improve its policy making capacity in education.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

The central purpose of the literature review in this qualitative study was to assist the researcher in making sense of and explaining data gathered in the field. Comparing that data with the body of literature on accountability, standards-based reform, and policy implementation was helpful in thinking about and making meaning of what was discovered in each of the three districts involved in this study.

This review of literature is organized into three separate but related areas. The first section begins with literature on accountability; the second section provides a review of standards-based reform; and the third section reviews the literature related to policy implementation.

Accountability

With the 1983 publication of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, Americans were given a threefold message: "education is declining, it is important, and schools must be held accountable for improvements" (Adams & Kirst, 1999, p. 464). Shortly thereafter, policy makers began a discussion of national educational goals, curriculum, and tests as the foundation for school improvements and accountability (Ravitch, 1995). Though teachers and parents had always been concerned about student performance, beginning in the mid-1980s, state and national political systems began to see student achievement as the central purpose of education (Adams & Kirst, 1999). To that end, state educational policies began to focus on student performance more than ever before.

To understand if an idea or policy works as it is intended to, researchers may look to its “theory of action.” Argyris and Schon argue that “individuals espouse ‘theories of action,’ or sets of principles and propositions to describe, assess and defend the effectiveness of their behavior...‘theories of action’...constitute a framework that individuals use to guide, interpret or justify their actions” (Malen, et al., 2002, p. 113). Scholars then use distinctions between “espoused theories” and “theories in use” to compare “the official version of how the program or organization operates” with “what really happens” (Patton, 1990 p. 107). Adams and Kirst (1999) have proposed that the theory of action underlying an accountability model utilizing student performance is to stimulate improvement in weaker schools and districts through reporting and comparison between them.

In an ideal system, performance-based accountability focuses educational policy, administration, and practice directly on teaching and learning. Accountability accomplishes this alignment, in principle, by defining goals, allocating authority, managing incentives, building capacity, measuring progress, reporting results, and enforcing consequences, all related to student performance. As such, educational accountability represents not only a movement to improve student achievement but as a mechanism to secure the relationship between public schools and their communities, grounding their relationship in explicit expectations and demonstrated performance as the basis of public support. (Adams & Kirst, 1999, p. 464)

Accounting, then, is necessary to protect citizens against the flaws of public agents while allowing citizens to maintain control through systems of accountability which extend the checks and balances that exist among the branches of government. Accountability links democracy and bureaucracy by authorizing and limiting the discretion and actions of public agents and checking their exercise of power (Adams & Kirst, 1999).

A similar theory of action described by DeBray, Parson, & Woodworth (2001) asserts that public reporting will make stakeholders uncomfortable with low performance

and provide pressure to do better. Margaret Goertz (in Fuhrman, 2001b) describes reporting information to the public as “the most basic form of accountability. Schools give an account of their programs and performance. The public can then use this information to demand improvements in schools” (p. 44).

The concept of accountability seems deceptively simple: someone is responsible for something to someone else. In this relationship, one party, the principal, engages another party, the agent, to produce outcomes desired by the principal. In the context of new demands for educational accountability, principals seek improved student performance and agents are expected to produce it (Adams, & Kirst, 1999). Accountability is far from simple, however, and Adams and Kirst (1999) have described several categories of accountability systems: bureaucratic, legal, professional, moral, political, and market. Though recent perceptions of accountability have narrowed the field of vision to bureaucratic and legal accountability, differences between all of them may reveal insights into the degree of success that can be expected when utilizing them in policy decisions.

Bureaucratic accountability ensures that the preferences and decisions of organizational leaders govern the work of employees throughout an organization. It is based on the relationship between superiors and subordinates and operates through a system of supervisory control characterized by hierarchical structure, standard operating procedures, and rewards and punishments. Bureaucratic systems exert a high degree of control over employees, who are expected to carry out their tasks by applying established rules and procedures (Adams & Kirst, 1999, p. 467).

Legal accountability also involves the enforcement of rules and a high degree of

control over agents. Control in a legal context, however, originates outside the agencies that must account for their actions. The legal accountability expectation is that individuals or agencies fulfill their fiduciary or contractual obligations. In this manner, a state legislature passes a law and monitors state or local education agencies' implementation of the law (Adams & Kirst, 1999, p. 467).

Professional accountability systems assume that systems are non-routine and that knowledgeable professionals must tailor their activities to meet clients' needs. In this case, principals act more as laypersons and employ experts (agents) to perform tasks or produce results. It is assumed that the experts possess specialized knowledge and skills to do so, and laypersons defer to that expertise yet have the power to terminate or continue professionals' employment based on their performance (Adams & Kirst, 1999, p. 469).

Professional accountability means that professionals orient their work toward student needs, focus on outcomes rather than processes, and utilize discretion rather than standard procedures. Educational managers hold teachers accountable for results without prescribing the route to take to achieve those results. In a professional context, schools become client-oriented firms that utilize specialized knowledge and seasoned judgment to address students' educational needs (Adams & Kirst, pp. 469-470). In Iowa, educators' specialized knowledge and skill has been recognized for years through state teacher and administrator licensure and re-certification requirements. Acknowledging that educating children is a complex endeavor, the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners mandated long ago that teachers and administrators continue to develop their skills and abilities to meet student needs. That expertise may also be enhanced through voluntary participation in

National Board Certification, which requires peer-reviewed, performance-based demonstrations of professional practice.

Another powerful, historically present, yet overlooked form of accountability, *moral accountability*, derives from agents' personal obligation or sense of duty. Here, agents' actions are conditioned by conscience and loyalty to the work-based principles and values they deem to be important. Though the degree of operational control over agents is low, the assumed obligation, and the threat of remorse or ostracism at failing to fulfill one's obligation are themselves powerful forces of accountability. While laws may require fulfillment of certain educational obligations, the primary response of many agents to social or employment obligations emanates from a moral standard of behavior they apply to their jobs. Moral accountability in schools, then, leads teachers, principals, counselors, and others to faithfully discharge their educational responsibilities, and schools operate as learning centers in which moral individuals make faithful efforts to fulfill the expectations they and others hold for educators. This sense of moral duty has been, and still is, the main motivation for educators, and other true professionals, to strive to reach the ideals of their profession (Adams & Kirst, 1999, pp. 470-471).

Market accountability is based on the notion that customers' expectations drive the creation and delivery of products and services. In this case, customer choice operates as the accountability mechanism. Theoretically, schools will change adjust their operations to satisfy parents' preferences for programs and quality. Vouchers, magnet schools, and contract schools (i.e. Edison) symbolize these voluntary market exchanges between the "customer" and the "provider" (Adams & Kirst, 1999, p. 471).

Finally, *political* accountability "involves constituents' expectations that their

elected or appointed representatives will respond to their value preferences. After all, politics is about allocating values through government, and educational concerns are not exempt” (Adams & Kirst, 1999, p. 470). Constituents hold their representatives accountable by giving or withholding their support, primarily at the polls. However, political accountability occurs in any situation where one party expects another to be responsive to his or her interests (Adams & Kirst, 1999, p. 470).

While understanding various categories of accountability can provide insight into policy implementation, by their very nature, accountability systems assume that people know the source of their problem and how to fix them (Adams & Kirst, 1999). As Elmore (2002a) indicates, legislation that doesn’t come with capacity building supports can only measure the results of the system; it does not provide the means to improve it:

Accountability systems do not produce performance; they mobilize incentives, engagement, agency, and capacity that produces performance. Accountability systems do not, for the most part, reflect any systematic coordination of capacity and accountability, nor do they reflect any clear understanding of what capacities are required to meet expectations for performance and where the responsibility for enhancing those capacities lies. A more specific and coherent theory of action for accountability systems would help....Whose responsibility is it to assure that these conditions are met? If it is that state that initiates the accountability requirement, then it is the state’s responsibility to assure that the capacities are in place to meet those requirements. (p. 13)

Fuhrman (2001a) suggests that policy makers realize that “accountability is not enough—it must be accompanied by capacity-building, including high quality intensive professional development” (p. 277). According to McLaughlin (1987), “Motivated professionals, we have seen, generally make every effort to do their job well” (p. 174). However, if those professionals don’t have the knowledge or skills to implement a policy, mandating that it occur is futile. Policy that does not increase capacity then serves to increase the gap between effective and ineffective schools, and may even lead low

capacity schools to respond by “gaming” the system (Elmore, 2002a, p. 19). Though Iowa doesn’t currently have explicit “high-stakes” assessment, Elmore’s point is cogent:

Test-based accountability without substantial investments in internal accountability and instructional improvement is unlikely to elicit better performance from low-performing students and schools. Furthermore, the increased pressure of test-based accountability alone is likely to aggravate the existing inequalities between low-performing and high-performing schools and students. Most high-performing schools simply reflect the social capital of their students, rather than the internal capacity of the schools themselves. Most low-performing schools cannot rely on the social capital of their students and families and instead must rely on their organizational capacity. With little or no investment in capacity, low-performing schools get worse relative to high-performing schools. (p. 37)

Two important and as yet unanswered questions surrounding accountability systems remain: 1) “the question is whether districts and states can muster the will and capacity to support teacher learning on a more intense level to expand standards-based teaching beyond the pockets where it occurs anyway” (Fairman & Firestone, 2001, p. 144), and 2) “Is it ethical to hold individuals—in this case educators—accountable for doing things they don’t know how to do and can’t be expected to do without considerable increase in their own knowledge and skill?” (Elmore, 2002a, p. 5). These and other difficult questions will likely be debated in the coming years.

While educators are implementing state accountability policies that Elmore (2002a, p. 3) has described as “essentially political constructs” and “highly provisional social experiments,” there has been a little research describing the effects of such experiments on educators themselves. One survey of 114 credentialed California teachers conducted by Barbara Benham Tye and Lisa O’Brien (2002) found increased accountability (high stakes testing, test preparation, and standards) was the number one reason for leaving education given by teachers who had already left the profession.

Accountability was also given as the third highest reason current teachers said they would consider leaving the profession (p. 27). Increased paperwork and additional nonteaching demands were ranked second by both groups as reasons for leaving the profession; both of which do not require the exercise of professional judgment (p. 28).

As a way to think about teachers' work, Apple developed the *intensification thesis* (as cited in van den Berg, 2002) and later Hargeaves (as cited in van den Berg, 2002) described "job intensification" as the large-scale redefinition of teachers' roles and expectations. This increased governmental and societal pressure on schools and teachers to be publicly responsible for their work is changing their working conditions. As governmental expectations, policy implementation requiring increased accountability is considerably changing teachers' work as they are confronted by a diversity of demands, expectations and desires that may not be in agreement with one another. According to Leithwood and Jantzi (as cited in van den Berg, 2002), in addition to unclear expectations, an overemphasis on student achievement and a lack of trust in teachers as professionals can lead to further job intensification. The potential uses of accountability data for teacher evaluation is also at issue:

When judgments about the effectiveness of teaching are based on student performance at a single point in time, these judgments send very mixed signals to individual teachers, and cloud the relationship between the student's learning and the teacher's sense of efficacy. What exactly is the teacher responsible for? ...the student's performance at a given moment? ...the learning that the teacher adds to the student's performance as a consequence of their interaction? ...or some compound of the two? If the teacher is not responsible for the learning of the student that occurs, or doesn't, before the student arrives in her classroom, who is? Holding prior teachers responsible for current levels of learning has value possibly for the present students of those teachers, but no value at all for the student in her present circumstances, since she can't recoup learning that failed to occur in the past. (Elmore, 2002a, pp. 14-15)

Schwarzer and Greenglass (as cited in van den Berg, 2002) argue successful that change is not predicated on stress but on sufficient levels of teacher efficacy, which can influence processes of school development. Along with other factors not discussed here, job intensification can lead teachers to experience stress and burnout. Research by Schaufeli, Daamen, and van Mierlo and de Heus and Diekstra (as cited in van den Berg, 2002) indicated teacher burnout was especially caused by having less control over the investment of time in their work, less participation in the decision making of the school, and less support from colleagues.

Standards-based Reform

Standards-based reform has evolved from systemic reform initiatives occurring since the mid-1980s. As the federal government has become more involved in setting the reform agenda on a national level, the term “standards-based reforms” is used to refer to the ways states have responded to the push for higher standards and school accountability (Chatterji, 2002). The theory behind standards-based reform is that policy alignment around standards and performance expectations—through accountability systems—aligns curriculum, assessment, teacher preparation, and professional development. If these things are not aligned, improvement does not occur (Fuhrman, 2001b).

While alignment is an essential concept in standards-based reform, it is not easy to achieve: “model curricula, new materials, and model teaching units” are often missing in state policies, which means that content standards are the sole guidance; as even content is vague, this leads to variation in implementation. In such situations, teachers focus on “what is covered in the assessment” (Fuhrman, 2001, p. 265). As Sirotnik

(2002) observes, “There is much more to life in such complex organizations as schools than can be indicated by mandated, point-in-time measurements” (p. 666):

Only the subjects tested—and only the limited ways in which these subjects are tested—receive the bulk of attention, much to the detriment of other valued goals and pedagogical practices. Study after study and poll after poll suggest that parents want much more for their children than what can be assessed by a few tests. (Sirotnik, 2002, p.666)

To further exacerbate alignment challenges, some states use “norm-referenced tests that are designed to measure the knowledge and skills of students across the country, rather than the knowledge and skills embodied in specific state standards” (Goertz, 2001, p. 55). Sirotnik (2002) suggests “Assessment systems are about creating and using ways to collect information on teaching and learning and about making appraisals or judgments based on that information. Accountability systems are about what is done with these appraisals” (p. 665). How well these parts of the system are aligned is an important consideration when using accountability systems to determine the success of standards-based reform efforts.

In addition to accountability purposes, many districts across the country are collecting information on teaching and learning and using it to make decisions about programs and instruction. However, it is important to note that while data based decision-making has gained a central role in policymaking, its effects are largely unknown. Elmore and Rothman note “The theory of action of the standards-based reform model suggests that, armed with data on how students perform against standards, schools will make the instructional changes needed to improve performance” (Massell, 2001, p. 148). However, Massell (2001) states, “The evidence of problems does not automatically express what one must do about them” (p. 167), and she suggests a limitation of the

theory: “Performance data are often not transparent and readily understandable [and] educators often do not have the prerequisite knowledge and skills to translate them” (DeBray, et al., 2001, p. 187). As DeBray et al. found, “those who were doing well before reinvested and those low performers fit a pattern of ‘compliance without capacity’” (p. 187). Finally, use of data that do not increase over time can erode educators’ sense of self-efficacy, which can “perpetuate a cycle of even lower expectations,” reinforcing blame and increasing feelings of helplessness (DeBray et al., 2001, p. 190).

While collecting data may help educators identify problems in their systems, the literature is clear that solving them requires the opportunity to learn: “The concept of opportunity to learn applies to all levels of the education system, not just to students....Clear goals and incentives are necessary, but not sufficient, to motivate teachers to reach their school’s student achievement goals” (Goertz, 2001, p. 57). Capacity building, feedback on assessments, and professional development are important in helping educators learn. “The unanswered question in the performance-based accountability movement is whether states and districts can ensure that these conditions exist, particularly in struggling and failing schools” (Goertz, 2001, p. 57). Richard Elmore (2002a, p. 28) asks, “Are schools nevertheless held accountable for their performance if neither they nor anyone else has the resources and other support to meet the accountability standard?” In fact, “the problem of who is actually responsible for student failure has become deeply politicized” (Elmore, 2002a, p. 9).

According to Susan Fuhrman (2001), the good news is that standards-based reform can begin to overcome low expectations:

These findings offer hope for continued educational improvement if enough

political stability can be created to sustain the standards agenda and if policy makers come to realize that accountability is not enough—it must be accompanied by capacity building, including high quality, intensive professional development (p. 277).

Also consistent with the research on increasing educator capacity and learning, a central finding of Cohen and Hill's (2001) 10-year study demonstrated there was "some success, but only when teachers had significant opportunities to learn" (p. 2). In that study, two sources of teacher learning included professional development activities and assessments to learn how to assess and to learn how students responded (Cohen & Hill, 2001). McLaughlin (1998) has also acknowledged that teachers must have the "opportunity to talk together, understand each others' practice, and move as a community to visions of practice....If teachers are not learning together, reflecting together, examining student work together, changes in governmental structures...will likely mean little in terms of student outcomes" (p. 81). While providing more opportunities for educators to learn seems like a reasonable path to school improvement, Cohen and Hill (2001) remind us, "reformers have to work within the existing system, but that system is often a powerful threat for reform."

Policy Implementation

As Richard Elmore (2002a) has pointed out, performance-based accountability systems are largely unproven social experiments; works in progress with schematic, underspecified designs. Implementing a seemingly unambiguous policy can be a challenging task in itself, let alone implementing one designed around such an experiment. In fact, planned change through educational reform has been historically more complex than initially anticipated. Past research on external change agents as reform mechanisms in K-12 education has shown that as these externally developed

interventions are implemented, they tend to change significantly as they adapt to local conditions and contexts (RAND, 2002). In fact, it has been said that “we do not clearly understand what a policy should be until we have thought about how it will be implemented” (Elmore, 1980, p. 29).

McLaughlin (1987) has suggested that program quality and impact issues are most promisingly analyzed by focusing on local, micro-implementation issues and the connections between micro and macro implementation issues. McLaughlin has also asserted that program impact depends on focusing on those who deliver services, the substance of the program, and on the knowledge professionals use in delivering those services. Over 25 years ago, it was recognized that “even the best planned, best supported, and most promising policy initiatives depend on what happens as individuals throughout the policy system interpret and act on them” (McLaughlin, 1998, p. 172). McLaughlin (1998) has also acknowledged the result of this local interpretation:

At each point in the policy process, a policy is transformed as individuals interpret and respond to it. What actually is delivered or provided under the aegis of a policy depends finally on the individual at the end of the line, or the “street level bureaucrat.” (p. 72)

Numerous studies have documented the importance of local context in understanding the variable effects of policy (McLaughlin, 1987). While Lipsky recognized the “street level bureaucrat” as the real policy influential back in 1980 (p. 3), more recently, Cohen and Hill (2001) recognized uneven policy implementation occurs because “variation in the way policy reaches the schools, other agencies and providers of professional development...encourage variation in responses to policy” (p. 174).

Policy implementers not only find that “local variability is the rule” (McLaughlin, 1998, p. 72), they also find that “planning for, implementing, and institutionalizing a

significant change usually consumes an inordinate amount of time. School people are already busy and rarely in a position to delegate or drop some of their responsibilities while they take on new ones” (Crandal, Eiseman, & Louis, 1986, p. 42). Similarly, Bay, Reys, and Reys (1999) found

A critical form of administrative support was giving teachers time. Release time was necessary for teachers to attend workshops..., to meet with other teachers...and to visit other teachers who were using the new curricula...and to visit classrooms...where implementation was going on. (p. 504)

Clearly, policy makers and implementers alike must realize that policy implementation does not occur overnight. As Sirotnik (2002) cautions:

Although there may be political urgency to produce quick results, meaningful change comes only from well-developed, deeply integrated social, political, and economic changes generally, as well as concomitant specific educational changes in resource allocation, curriculum, instruction, and organizational structures in schools. All of this takes time, a lot of time. Responsible accountability systems will require a long-term focus. (p. 668)

Though policy implementation can require significant amounts of time and result in local variation, it has a better chance of succeeding when supported by leadership. As reported in Fairman and Firestone (2001), “Rosenblum and Louis found that superintendent support was a key predictor of successful implementation” (p. 134). Firestone (1989) also observes that “when key decision makers in a district have a propensity to act in a certain direction and see the policy as contributing to their own goals, they will implement it aggressively” (p. 134).

Leaders also create the conditions in which implementation occurs. In 1985, Schein noted: “In fact, there is a possibility...that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is create and manage culture” (Astuto & Clark, 1986, p. 61). This is consistent with Astuto and Clark’s (1986) observation:

When managers focus on accountability they miss opportunities to foster the real source of the productivity gains—the people. Fostering a sense of individual efficacy and esprit de corps places the people, the key actors, in a pre-eminent position and sets the stage for them to invest their energies and skills in the organization....The necessary strategy for managers is to provide the occasion, the mechanisms, and the conditions for members of their organization to contribute and to increase their capacity to contribute. (pp. 65-66)

According to McDonnell and Elmore (1987), research on policy implementation has reached the point of focusing not only on how to get programs implemented but also how to make them “work.” They have suggested that new research should focus less on specific programs and more on policy instruments such as mandates, regulations, and incentives. They have also argued that the underlying policy mechanisms utilized in any new program may be the most important element for program impact. They also believe more needs to be known about how different policy instruments such as mandates, inducements, capacity-building, and system changing mechanisms work across different types of programs:

Mandates are rules governing the action of individuals and agencies, and are intended to produce compliance; inducements transfer money to individuals or agencies in return for certain actions; capacity-building is the transfer of money for the purpose of investment in material, intellectual, or human resources; and system changing transfers official authority among individuals and agencies in order to alter the system by which public goods and services are delivered. (p. 134)

When officials lack knowledge of the policy tools available to them, they may turn to mandates by default (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987): “Many times the imposition of new mandates seems the most feasible option because it appears relatively inexpensive and presumably sends a clear signal about what policy makers expect from those being regulated” (p. 135).

Officials also lack systemic knowledge about the relative effectiveness of alternate instruments in addressing different types of problems, their underlying

dynamics, comparative costs, attendant problems, and how well they fit into existing policy environments. This deficiency is a particular problem in policy areas like education because of the wide range of problems that must be addressed and the numerous local settings in which policy must operate. (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, p. 135)

Because implementation takes place in these “numerous local settings,” the affirmation of local control is treated as central to the reform itself:

Our recommendations are grounded in the belief that reform is most needed where learning takes place—in the individual schools, in the classroom, and in the interaction between teachers and student. As businessmen worldwide have learned, problems can be best solved at the lowest level of operation. (Timar & Kirp, 1987, p. 309)

Though local educators may agree with that sentiment, it’s sometimes unclear who’s in charge. In fact, McDonnell shows that “Policy implementation may be difficult when a governmental initiative fundamentally challenges traditional norms of who governs schools” (Odden, 1991, p. 11). Though state officials may attempt to help educators keep local control by requiring local data to meet federal compliance demands, they may find “What was politically essential for survival was ideologically at odds with what it claimed to stand for” (Ellis, 2000, p. 128). Maintaining local control is also complicated by the fact that “Political interactions often shape what (or whose) knowledge is privileged” (Malen, 1998, p. 180).

“Policies work by bringing the resources of government...into the service of political objectives; and by using those resources to influence the actions of individuals and institutions” (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, p. 133). In short, policies attempt to get people to do what they wouldn’t ordinarily do; they are about control. Over 15 years ago, however, McLaughlin (1987) recognized that legislators have a difficult time controlling quality: “policy makers can’t mandate what matters...policy...depends on local capacity

and will. Capacity is something that a policy can address...will reflects an implementer's assessment of the value of the policy" (p. 172). Timar and Kirp (1987) also observe "Excellence cannot be coerced or mandated. Rather, it is a condition to which individuals may aspire" (p. 309). Thomas Kelly (1999) also cites Deming's belief that if you want to improve the product (student achievement), you must ask, not tell, the workers (teachers and administrators) how to do it. This must be a standing question so improvement can be a continuous process. Kelly (1999) continues to explain that

Excellence is the habit of self-improvement.... The same is true for organizations. No external force can make an organization excellent. Organizational excellence is a function of leadership, not authority. And the role of leadership is to persuade an organization's members to commit themselves to becoming excellent. (p. 544)

With that understanding, as educators and policy influentials both strive to work with accountability systems and standards-based reform, it might be wise to consider that "mandates and inducements often fail for lack of knowledge, skill, and competence rather than the will to comply" (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, p. 138).

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Due to the nature of the research questions posed in this study, a qualitative methodology was most appropriate for exploring the issues involved. As qualitative researchers understand, truth is contextual. Researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Reality is not viewed as a collection of facts but as multiple social constructions of individual or collective definitions of the situation. Thus, the epistemology of post-positivism requires inseparableness between the known and the knower and an empathetic understanding of the people studied. By inductively understanding natural phenomena, patterns and theories emerge which lead to explanations (Curtiss, 2001).

In any study, it is important to state clearly the philosophical assumptions that will guide it. In this project, as with qualitative research, it was first assumed that knowledge is within the meanings people make of it. It was also understood that knowledge is gained through people talking about their meanings and is laced with personal biases and values. Finally, knowledge is written in a personal, up-close way and evolves, emerges, and is inextricably tied to the context in which it is studied (Creswell, 1998). Because meaning and knowledge are bound to context, it was hoped this study would reveal the nature of contextual differences as they affect policy implementation in small districts.

Because qualitative research is based on a description of truth that differs from quantitative approaches, it is also understandable that the field employs distinct methods to inquire about the world. For example, qualitative inquiry research designs are

evolving, flexible, general, and negotiated (Creswell, 1998). In this study, qualitative methods, including one-on-one interviews, field notes, and review of related documents and artifacts were utilized to provide primarily descriptive data. Using participants' own words and describing the context and process of their small district implementation efforts supported and necessitated a qualitative approach.

Site Selection

While it was not the intent of the researcher to evaluate success, judge, or rank school districts in their policy implementation efforts, rationale was needed to determine which three or four districts would be included in this study. The following criteria were used to determine potential district site selection:

- 1) Total district student enrollment of less than 750 (a somewhat arbitrary number defining "small" for the purposes of this study)
- 2) Little administrative turnover since the beginning of the implementation process
- 3) Districts actively implementing the mandates
- 4) Districts located in north central Iowa

While other important studies have considered the implementation of Iowa educational policy in medium and larger-sized districts, none have focused on small districts under 750 students or approximately 57% of the districts in Iowa. Of the 371 public school districts in the state, 212 had 750 or fewer students K-12; of those, 65 were located in north central Iowa, narrowing the feasible potential study sites.

In 1989, William Firestone first identified "active user districts" as those who latched on to new state initiatives and went beyond them (Odden, 1991, p.10). Because it

was more likely that thoughtful practitioners were leading educational change in active user districts, small north central Iowa districts were sought whose implementation of policy mandates had been actively occurring. After narrowing the initial pool of participating sites to 65 districts, recommendations for “active districts” were solicited from those familiar with the work of area school systems. Those recommendations came from three Area Education Agency consultants, three area superintendents, two principals, two higher education professors, and an official with School Administrators of Iowa. Because school districts that were actively implementing mandates had a reputation for doing so, this process further narrowed the list to six districts. After triangulating all recommendations, three districts emerged by near consensus. After contacting each potential site’s superintendent and explaining the nature of the study, the time commitment involved, and the logistics for carrying out the interviews, the superintendent’s decision to commit to the district’s participation in the study determined final site selection.

Use of Human Subjects

The Drake University Human Subjects Research Review Committee reviewed this study to determine if confidentiality would be assured, if informed consent would be obtained appropriately, and if the study would pose any risk to the participants involved. A copy of the Interviewee Consent Form is located in Appendix C.

Interviewee Selection

In each of the three districts selected, teachers and administrators involved in school improvement were interviewed. As a rich source of data, the qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge (Kvale, 1996). This interdependence of

human interaction and knowledge production is not only a hallmark of qualitative research; it links the philosophical assumptions of this study with data collection.

Following a commitment by each superintendent to participate in the study, two of those superintendents and one experienced principal/curriculum coordinator served as the researcher's contact people within each district. Beyond approving participation in the project, the third superintendent was not involved, as he was in his first year with the district and believed the principal/curriculum coordinator would be better suited to assist with the study. Drawing on previous knowledge of their site's personnel, the contact people each generated a list of eight to ten "knowledge elite" (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 1999) individuals in their district. The researcher requested that the contacts identify those administrators and teachers that had a deep working knowledge and were actively involved in their district's school improvement process. In addition, it was requested that interviewees had been with the district at least since 1998.

Interviewees included two current district superintendents as well as one former district superintendent. In all cases, and for obvious reasons, the two current superintendents and one curriculum coordinator/principal chose most interviewees from their district's internal "Design Team" (School Improvement Team), which included nine elementary teachers, four middle school teachers, and six high school teachers. All administrators were interviewed in each district as well, including the elementary, middle school, and high school principals, and the person responsible for curriculum, instruction, and assessment duties (who in some cases doubled as a principal).

In addition to facilitating the identification and access to other knowledge elites in the district, as insiders, two superintendents and one curriculum coordinator/principal

also assisted in establishing the researcher's credibility and even made introductions on the researcher's behalf (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002).

Once the interviewees were identified, the researcher officially invited them to participate in the interviews through formal letters that included background on the researchers' credentials, an accompanying description of the project, and logistics associated with the interviews. Full disclosure of the goals and uses of the findings were also made to participants.

Interview Protocol

An interview protocol developed by Lindaman and Wulf (2002) provided the framework for each interview in this study, and two versions of that protocol can be found in Appendix B. The main interview questions included:

- 1) From what you know, what was House File 2272 intended to do?
- 2) Do you feel you had the necessary resources and skills to implement your district's goals?
- 3) Share with me the process your district utilized to implement House File 2272.
- 4) Why do you think the legislature enacted House File 2272?

Pilot Study

To allow the researcher to determine the value of the questions in the interview protocol while developing skill in asking questions that would elicit rich interview data, the interview protocol was piloted in the researcher's own district with three administrators and two teachers. While no questions were changed as a result of the pilot interviews, the practice allowed the researcher to incorporate the interview questions into

a more conversational style and simultaneously learn to pace the interview to honor to the 45-60 minute time frame.

Interview and Data Gathering Process

These in-depth, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher and served as the primary data source for this study. Before each interview began, the researcher assured the participants that anonymity would be maintained by omitting names and readily identifiable characteristics from the final document. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes in length, though the longest interview lasted 90 minutes. To allow flexibility to change questions while maintaining an overall structure, the interview was structured around main questions, probes, and follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The qualitative in-depth interviews were more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. Fundamental to qualitative research is the understanding that the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it. While four central questions were designed to guide this interview protocol, the most important aspect of the interviewer's approach was conveying the attitude that the participant's views were valuable and useful (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The researcher made the most of the time allotted by finding out as much as possible about the district beforehand in order to conserve time for gathering information that was otherwise unattainable. Given the time constraints within which knowledge elites work, a copy of the interview protocol or general questions was provided in advance to the respondents so that they could be prepared to speak directly to the issue of

interest or independently supply the researcher with relevant artifacts (Odendahl & Shaw, 2002).

Interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed by a third party. Field notes were also written for each site. Utilizing field notes as a source of data was necessary to record observations and researcher interpretations not captured by the audiotape. Participant body language, facial expressions, and interruptions that occurred all added to the description of the context and content of the interview. Field notes also served to capture researcher thoughts, ideas, and connections that were made in the field.

Because history and context surrounding a specific setting can come from reviewing documents, other relevant data sources, such as the districts' Comprehensive School Improvement Plans, Annual Progress Reports, building improvement plans, and the districts' websites were reviewed. These data sources portrayed the values and beliefs of participants in the setting while allowing the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the context through unobtrusive means (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Coding

Coding is the formal representation of analytic thinking (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In this study, data were transcribed and preliminary coding schemes were developed after two of the sites' interviews were completed. This served to complete the coding process in a timely manner as well as guide subsequent interviews to insure the information represented the variety of data desired. Coding was a progressive process of sorting and defining all collected data (transcripts, artifacts, and field notes) and putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps to create an organizational framework of codes and subcodes (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Data were categorized into the

preliminary codes by reading, thinking, trying out the tentative categories, changing them when others did a better job, checking them until the last piece of meaningful information was categorized, and then still being open to revising the categories and codes (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991). Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1998) referred to this process of manually coding data as open, axial, and selective coding, while Glaser and Strauss (1967) described the development of themes and subthemes as the constant comparative method.

Data Analysis

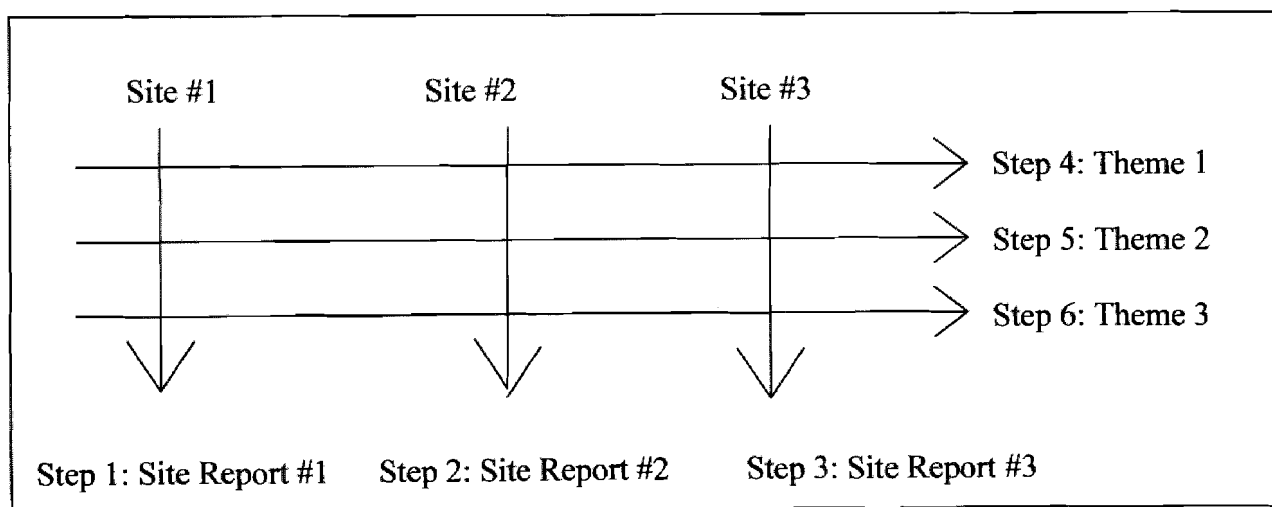
The researcher approached data analysis as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) who defined data analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction occurred through continuous selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting the data that appeared in written-up field notes and transcriptions. Data displays organized categories of information into a compact, immediately accessible form so the researcher could see what was happening and either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next step of analysis as suggested by the categorical display (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The third component of this researcher's data analysis involved drawing conclusions. From the beginning of data collection, the researcher began to decide what things meant by noting regularities, patterns, explanations, and propositions. These conclusions were held lightly while maintaining openness and skepticism, but the conclusions were still there, vague at first, then increasingly grounded and explicit. Conclusions were verified by reviewing applicable data sources and by confirming validity through member checks and triangulation (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data were preliminarily analyzed during the early stages of the study, even during the same time period as data collection. This allowed the researcher to collect new data to fill in gaps, to test new hypotheses that emerged during analysis, and to somewhat lessen the vast task of analysis at the end of the data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data were analyzed in two ways. First, data from each site were analyzed individually as one data set. A site report was written for each district, and trustworthiness of those findings were enhanced through triangulation and developing and maintaining an audit trail. A copy of the relevant site report was also given to two superintendents and one curriculum coordinator/principal to serve as a member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After the site reports were written, the researcher looked across the site reports for emergent themes. Figure 1 below illustrates the data analysis process.

Figure 1. Interview Data Analysis Process



Discussion of the findings considered the literature on accountability, standards-based reform, and policy implementation. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations for policy makers and future research completed the study.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This study was designed to describe the implementation of Iowa's Accountability for Student Learning Act (House File 2272) in three small, rural K-12 Iowa schools districts who were actively implementing the state policy. This chapter begins with a site report for each of the three districts included in this policy implementation study. The chapter concludes with a cross-site analysis and discussion of the findings that provide the basis for conclusions related to the research questions.

Site Report: District A

Background

Located in rural north central Iowa, District A's new and renovated K-12 school building is located in a town of over 2000 people. While two other small towns contribute to the total district population of approximately 4,000 citizens, they do not house attendance centers. District A enrolls less than 750 students served by over 50 teachers and three administrators. Supported economically by four successful industries, the school district is the fifth largest employer in the town with about 100 employees.

As with most other schools in Iowa, the ethnically homogeneous student body is 96% Caucasian. Twenty percent of its students are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches. At 2:1, the district's computer-to-student ratio is indicative of the vital role of technology in District A's curriculum.

District A is an award-winning school and supports its students' academic and character development through their strong tradition of excellence. At the time of the educator interviews in 2002, 100% of the students participated in one or more service

learning activities, over 85% were involved in extra-curricular activities, and over 50% of students in grades 6-12 were on the honor roll. Over 70% of the 2002 graduating class reported plans to attend college or technical school, and the dropout rate was 1%.

Indicators of the district's incredible academic success include their standardized test scores. On average, students scored 21.7 on the American College Test during the 2001-02 school year. On the fourth grade Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, students scored in the 70th national percentile in math, the 80th NPR in reading, and the 87th NPR in science. In the eighth grade, students scored at the 85th NPR in math, the 80th NPR in reading, and the 88th NPR in science. In the 11th grade, students scored at the 90th NPR in math, the 82nd percentile in reading, and the 80th NPR in science. This provided the context for the three administrators and six teachers who were interviewed in District A.

Findings

The findings from District A are organized into eight categories: 1) community engagement and support, 2) historical school improvement efforts, 3) policy intent, 4) policy impact, 5) implementation barriers, 6) implementation supports, 7) unintended consequences, and 8) recommendations to policy influentials.

Community Engagement and Support

House File 2272 required that all Iowa school districts involve their local communities and educators by requiring their equitable representation on each district's "School Improvement Advisory Committee." These committees are still required to recommend to their school board Long-range and Annual Improvement Goals for student achievement in reading and math at grades four, eight, and eleven and in science at grades eight and eleven. While involving community members in local decision-making

processes in this way may have been unfamiliar territory for some districts in the state, District A enjoyed a strong tradition of community engagement and support long before the legislation was ever passed.

Community engagement was confirmed by the presence of an active external community committee, referred to as the District Advisory Committee. Though the committee adjusted its focus to include implementing the specifics of 2272, District A had interested people in place to address implementation issues right from the start. From a consistency perspective, an administrator noted it was helpful that committee members "...just want to continue to stay on."

One interviewee believed another important ingredient that led to their high level of historical community engagement was based on the fact that they "lived in a community that really thought that school is one of the most important things for its young people." Whether that belief was because of the district's efforts or not was difficult to say, but according to an administrator, 2272 didn't have anything to do with it: "I think this district was doing things the correct way before the legislation. I think that getting input on a local level, reporting back to your public--your customers if you will, we were doing that."

In addition to establishing community School Improvement Advisory Committees, school districts were required to report specific pieces of student achievement information to their local community members in their "Annual Progress Report." Again, District A already had a history of engaging community members by consistently sharing information from the school district. Not only did they publish a weekly page in the local newspaper with school-related information, they also exchanged

ideas and information through community focus groups and surveys: “We always reported a lot of information to the public. A lot of focus groups we do give us input. Around all those things in 2272, we already had them in place and added to it.” One teacher shared, “It just seems like we’ve had focus groups every other year; we get together at the end of the year and invite community people in and ask, “How do you think our school is doing?” She also explained that a special effort was continually made to include focus group participants who may not have children in school or who might not always have been positive supporters of the district. In this active district, as demonstrated by these interviewees’ comments, House File 2272’s requirements regarding community involvement were perceived as exercises in redundancy.

Historical School Improvement Efforts

Educators in District A believed they were better able to implement 2272 than other less active districts in the state because they had a culture of school improvement in place for years. Actually, educators felt strongly that they were already in compliance with the intent of the law because “We would have been doing what we are doing regardless of 2272...because that’s how we operate.” The beliefs and practices central to that culture of improvement included: 1) believing that culture and climate matter, 2) possessing an action research-oriented mentality, 3) involving everyone in school improvement, and 4) having a school improvement “Design Team.”

Culture and climate matter. In District A, there was no denying the distinct value placed on maintaining a climate and culture conducive to supporting and nurturing high levels of teacher and student learning. Building this foundation began in the 1980’s and became a central part of the district’s school improvement efforts:

It's interesting because prior to 2272, a lot of our action plans had to do a lot more with culture and climate. We really believed that by letting people know that we cared and creating a caring community and working on an engaging curriculum, those two pieces would raise student achievement.

Though not required or even mentioned in 2272, educators here developed an annual culture/climate goal to be included in their Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. An interviewee explained its value:

For example on our climate goal, we wanted to increase the [student] perception that "My teachers really care about me." And to be honest, I have a personal bias; I think that is the most important goal we have. I don't care what your goals are on reading or on math--you know the old saying, "If they don't know you care, they don't care what you know."

Action research-oriented culture. Educators in District A were already part of a culture that encouraged and supported action research at the district, building, and classroom level. As modeled by the Design Team, people here were asking questions, gathering data, writing action plans, and implementing them long before the legislature required it: "I think most of the schools in our AEA were used to writing action plans, so that helped a lot. And setting goals for school improvement, having time lines for collecting things also helped." Clearly proud of the tradition, an administrator described their thinking:

We were already used to bringing the community in and getting their input; we had already decided what our student essential learnings and our outcomes or standards were. We [believed] that whole idea that you never really arrive...and if Everyday Math comes out this year, we ought to take a look at it and say, 'Is this something that our students will benefit from? Will their math scores go up?' People were already action researchers here. I'm going to try this and see how it works and here's what I'm going to record.

Involve everyone. While perhaps cliché or trite, the phrase "we're all in this together," seemed to sum up the collaborate efforts of the entire staff in District A. In addition to making site-based decisions through their internal Design Team, educators in

District A contributed to a culture of cooperation that was expected of everyone. Sharing a slice of this evidence one educator said of staff development, “We try to accommodate [everyone]; if you are a member of the coaching staff and want to participate, then we would accommodate that somehow.” A teacher expressed his appreciation for the value placed on distributed leadership: “I just feel like we have been so lucky to have the administration, and even the teacher push, in the leadership they’ve given the teachers, too.”

Design Team. As an internal leadership group of teachers, administrators, and an AEA representative, the “Design Team” met regularly to lead District A’s school improvement efforts for several years before HF 2272 was enacted. Driven by staff needs assessment information, student achievement data, and best practices, the Design Team meshed those through collegial discussions to determine district direction. Members then designed and evaluated professional development opportunities for staff members. When thinking of implementing 2272 an administrator observed, “Our district is real big on surveys [of staff and community] and gathering data, so I think we were pretty prepared for it.”

Perhaps taken for granted because it had just been part of the way they did business, no interviewees mentioned the role of the Design Team. However, it seemed to be an integral part of school improvement prior to 2272, and it became an essential structure for implementing the legislation’s requirements.

Policy Intent

Most educators in District A supported what they believed were the purposes of Iowa’s accountability law. From their perspective, the intent of the legislation included

all of the following: 1) to increase accountability for student achievement, 2) to ensure educational equity in Iowa schools, 3) to maintain Iowa's reputation for educational excellence, 4) and to report specific pieces of information to the public.

Increase accountability. Most educators agreed that the central purpose of HF 2272 was to improve schools by increasing district accountability for student achievement. One administrator reflected, "I think the intent was wonderful. I think the intent was to improve schools, and becoming more accountable is one way to improve schools." According to one teacher, if schools weren't improving on their own, this legislation was intended to have some teeth and "make 'em do it." Another teacher believed the new legislation meant "you have to improve; you have to look and find out where your inadequacies are and improve on them. All that data and information that you gather isn't just busy work; you need to act on it."

There was also some feeling that Iowa policy makers may have been influenced by factors outside of the state: "A lot of this stuff that we're having to do is because of the national pressure to be accountable." Whatever the case, it was clear that the perceived need for more educational accountability fueled the legislation.

Ensure school equity. There was a strong voice among educators who believed that legislators were attempting to provide equal educational opportunities for Iowa's children. One administrator summarized that perception:

It shouldn't matter what town you're in in Iowa. You should have educators who are passionate about student achievement, or working as a learning community who are having wonderful conversations, and sometimes arguments, about what should happen because they care. It shouldn't matter what town you're in...you will be guaranteed of a school, a public school, that will have standards. And I agree with that...I think that truly was one of the intents that it would be, throughout the state, more equitable.

Similarly, another educator stated:

I think they were responding to the voters. I think they were trying to equal out everything, make one school equal to another school. If we can be accountable, if we can put everybody on the same playing field, then all of our schools will be good. And I just don't think that is how it works.

Maintain Iowa's reputation. Many citizens throughout the state and across the nation recognize that Iowa has a reputation for excellence in education. Educators in District A thought it was likely the legislature enacted 2272 in order to maintain that reputation. An administrator commented that "Iowa has had a great reputation, and we don't want to rest on our laurels; continuing to improve is just good common sense." In that same vein, another administrator stated her belief that the intent of 2272 was to raise test scores, presumably to maintain that reputation: "I think that they overreacted to some data that was there. Particularly standardized testing...the dropping scores."

Community reporting. While District A had a long-standing practice of reporting to its community, educators there believed the intent of 2272 was to require districts in Iowa to "report to their publics how they were doing on certain curriculum areas and also school improvement progress," and to "make it a standardized form so that all schools would report similar things." Though not a commonly expressed sentiment, one administrator suggested that this uniform reporting requirement "just seemed like a way to have districts compared to one another."

Policy Impact

The impact of the accountability law on District A can be summarized in the following categories: 1) more formalized reporting of state-specified requirements (Annual Progress Report), 2) development and refinement of assessments, and 3) more conscious use of data.

Reporting format. One visible impact that 2272 had on District A was in requiring that the district make an "Annual Progress Report" to its community members. This report was to contain specific information determined by the Iowa Department of Education ("the checklist"), and was meant to serve as the accountability mechanism for each district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. Though community reporting had been occurring in District A for a number of years already, 2272 required that the APR contain the specified information in the checklist and be sent to community members, the local Area Education Agency, and the Iowa Department of Education. An administrator recalled that the reporting "had to be formalized for a state audience--for the CSIP readers, whoever those people might be." He continued, stating that

...the major shift was in putting it into [this] format. Our format before was our [local newspaper] on a weekly basis. After my first year here, we were required to submit the CSIP and the APR. And so that brought it into a structure that hadn't been necessary before; we were already reporting to our public through our web site, the newspaper, and through meetings, and the state just required us to use that form.

Another administrator described the change in reporting school improvement progress:

I think the important part is communicating your message to your constituents that are close by and then just making sure you're meeting their needs. And then in addition you also meet the guidelines. It comes back to who's your audience, what's your purpose. And the audience for a lot of this work is a variety of people. It's the public, stakeholders, it's the state, it's the DE; so you know, we've had to branch out and start thinking about our audience being more than just our local community, and that's one big change for 2272.

The requirement to write a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan and publish an Annual Progress Report could have been viewed as an unnecessary and inconvenient reorganization of data archival and action planning. Instead, administrators in District A saw the mandate as an opportunity to "get a little more organized in our efforts." They thought "the good thing about that was it made us put everything in one place, in one

document.” Another administrator confirmed the value of putting together the Annual Progress Report:

I don't know that we've changed a lot because of the implementation of this; we've always been doing a lot of things in curriculum and looking at assessment and collecting data. It just has made us more aware of the value of collecting data and summarizing all of it and kind of collecting it into one place, so that when we report on it we aren't looking all over for who's got this information, who's got that information.

Assessment development and refinement. In addition to collecting and reporting specific information required by 2272, the legislation caused the district to look more closely at refining the administration and scoring of the district-wide student assessments it had already begun to develop. As a teacher shared, “I think we have been more intentional at refining our assessments. We were always doing assessments, but 2272 kind of forced us to refine and be more intentional.” Another recalled her participation in professional development on administering assessments:

Well, in the elementary, we had inservices on the difference between CBM's and running records and how to give those. So we were all in the same boat, because several of us had different interpretations, and if this is going to be a valid and reliable measure, we all need to be together.

The focus on developing and refining a district-wide assessment system also caused educators in District A to think about the appropriateness and value of the district-wide assessments that were in place at the time:

I think it's also made us think as a school district about different ways to assess children. If we aren't really happy with the ACT and ITBS and some of the other standardized tests, then what are some other data we can use to help counteract that and still be reliable in the sense that we just didn't do it so it makes us look better? So I like how that has made our school look for different ways to assess. And not that it's just been recently either, but since the late 1990's, it just seems like we've been trying to evolve.

While the legislation also required the reporting of norm-referenced, standardized test results, it encouraged District A to re-emphasize the value of multiple methods of assessment, particularly at the classroom level as this teacher described: “[It’s] making me rethink things...with my curriculum...if I think something’s important then how will I measure that? And if it’s really not that important, than I guess I’m not going to spend my time with it then.” She continued and explained the questions she regularly asks herself when dealing with classroom assessment:

How can I truly measure it so that I know students are learning it? And not one way; I really try to do different things, even with projects I do. I don’t want to just do the same thing because it will always be the same type of student that likes that--that will be successful.

Use of data. Though using data about student achievement had been occurring in District A for several years before the implementation of 2272, educators felt the legislation prompted them to compile student scores and help parents understand more clearly what those student achievement results meant. The result was collection of students’ achievement test results in a “purple folder,” as an educator explains:

The purple folder is what we use to accumulate the data for different reading assessments. We have most of the reading scores in a purple folder that we share with parents year after year. It’s a cumulative folder and it follows the child at this point through 8th grade, but the plan is on expanding it through 12th grade.

Educators have also made an effort to educate parents as to the meaning of the information in the purple folder:

I also think our community, especially our parents, are more educated because of our purple folder; by the time they have hit fourth grade they are able to ask, “What is the Gates [McGinite] score?” They understand now what we are assessing for...I think parents probably are a little more educated on what all these assessments are for.

In addition to educating parents about assessment results, educators themselves were pushed to use data to set annual improvement (student achievement) goals, as required by 2272:

The one thing that 2272 made us get better at is setting goals around academic areas and raising student achievement, and I don't think that is a bad thing. I think it has made us be more conscious users of all of our data.

Implementation Barriers

Educators in District A saw four main barriers to implementation efforts: 1) time, 2) money, 3) jargon, and 4) external compliance.

Time. One barrier to the implementation of 2272 was the short timelines imposed by the legislation. Had they had more time, the curriculum director believed staff would have been more passionate about their Comprehensive School Improvement Plan as he explains:

[We needed to] give ourselves more time to have more input on our CSIP. It would have been a lot more powerful instead of me summarizing what people were doing if we could've come together and through facilitation, everyone would've come to the same understanding that I did. I mean, one of the reasons I'm in the position I'm in is that I can see the big picture...Whenever we've truly made change in our district it hasn't come about because I can see it, it's come about because I see it and then we facilitate toward other people seeing it in their own ways; because it has to be an internal thing that gets you there. We were in such a rush that I just put together all of the pieces so people saw it. They didn't disagree, but they also weren't passionate.

Money. Because it was an unfunded mandate, implementing 2272 was more difficult without the dollars to support paying people to do the extra work necessary to meet new requirements. Though they felt fortunate to already be well along the path of school improvement and were able to implement requirements more easily than other districts, one educator still lamented, "There's never enough time, money, expertise. I mean, there just isn't."

Jargon. Another barrier to implementation was a difference in the language of the state mandate and the school improvement language the district had been accustomed to: “I don’t really think there was anything in there that we weren’t already doing. The biggest barrier was translating their jargon into our jargon.”

External compliance. Many educators in District A felt that being forced by law to improve was less motivating than choosing to do it voluntarily. In addition to not being very motivating or validating, external compliance was seen as a barrier to change:

It hits different people different ways. People that resent interference from an outside big brother image are more reluctant to change because they’re feeling it’s an outside mandate. I don’t think people change because somebody tells them to. I think people change because they go through a learning process. So, if it feels real heavy handed, there can actually be turn off.

One administrator observed that compliance is “way different than creativity.” Though he admitted that creativity hadn’t been sacrificed because district leadership wouldn’t allow it, he said that it effectively “knocks the wind out of people’s sails.” A colleague also reflected on her memories of previous improvement efforts:

The early days were very exciting because we were doing it because we knew it was the right thing to do. The down side of when you turn it into a law is that it starts to feel like compliance. Instead of the many innovative things that could happen, you’re more worried about giving them the right piece of paper than you are about innovation. That’s the down side of 2272.

Implementation Supports

In addition to building a solid base for school improvement prior to 2272, educators in District A perceived that the implementation of HF 2272 was supported by three main factors: 1) district leadership, 2) the local Area Education Agency, and 3) professional development opportunities.

Leadership. In District A, leadership came from teachers, administrators, and the Design Team, and they all played a role in policy implementation. As a part of this leadership effort, administrators shaped their response to the legislation by keeping the focus on individual classrooms and tailoring the mandate to fit their local context. As the superintendent recounted, “We still stressed to our staff no matter what happens, success happens in the individual classrooms. No matter what legislation you have, everything still gets back to what happens in the classroom.” That message was conveyed at every opportunity, and administrators constantly reminded teachers that they made the difference, not the legislation. A principal expressed her beliefs about this philosophy:

When people change it’s because they get excited and they know it will be better for kids. That’s the part we’ve tried to do is to down play a lot of the bureaucracy of it and instead keep it exciting by, at our inservices keeping it focused on doable things in the classroom. The closer to the classroom and the kids something is with change the more it actually happens. That’s the only place it really happens. Classrooms, that’s where change occurs. If it doesn’t happen there, none of the other stuff matters anyway.

Administrators in District A also consciously decided to shape the implementation of the state mandate and not wait for it to shape them. They seemed determined to tailor the implementation to their locally unique context; an administrator recognized the importance of those involved in executing the mandate:

The smart district looks at the mandate and says, “Ok, how does this play out in our district? What can we do that will be useful to us?” If you don’t do that, then the mandate will not change anything anyway, because the people have to own it.

By building on the school improvement efforts already underway in the district, educators there were able to respond to state requirements in a way that reflected their previous work and provided continuity of focus. One educator said they “took the parts we were already doing and we made those our goals.” An administrator commented,

“We’ve taken what we’re doing and molded it and helped it fit the legislation....We told the staff in no uncertain terms this is not something the state’s going to do to us.”

Teachers also saw the necessity of customizing the implementation process in order for it to make sense for their district:

I think that’s the nice thing about this district...it seems like we’re always trying to be ahead of what the state’s already thinking about and trying to be ahead of that thought and maybe show a way we can do it without doing it the way they want to mandate it. You know, that maybe makes more sense educationally.

Area Education Agency support. Educators in District A were very complimentary of the support they had received from their local Area Education Agency: “I feel we had a good AEA that had already gotten us a lot of support starting from the 80’s on really looking at student achievement.” In addition to providing consultants to assist with the development of multiple student assessment measures, the AEA sponsored summer leadership retreats for its area districts. During the course of two to three days, Design Teams from each district heard from the latest thinkers on best educational practices, analyzed district data, set goals, and created action plans to be implemented the following year. Teachers and administrators in District A credit those retreats with beginning a real focus on student achievement and becoming a learning community: “It was when we started going to the leadership institutes and started listening to a lot of very thought provoking speakers from across the nation that was really the impetus that got us turning into a learning community.”

Professional development. The Design Team in District A had a history of working together to design professional development experiences necessary to achieve their school improvement goals. A member of the Design Team explains how the group approached staff development:

We believe strongly in staff development; our inservices are set up so there's district time around our common goals, building level time, and individual time for curriculum, instruction and assessment work....We are putting our dollars where the initiatives are, where the goals are....if we are going to move the system, we have to focus on the goals.

There was also the attempt to provide as much staff development time as possible. By emailing managerial information rather than disseminating it during precious staff meeting time, staff meetings came to be focused on professional dialogue: "We use our weekly meeting times to teach people and to give people strategies around our goals."

Unintended Consequences

Three unintended outcomes of implementing 2272 included 1) more paperwork, 2) a caution against manipulating scores to look good, and 3) a feeling of being distrusted.

More paperwork. Though educators in District A generally supported the intent of the accountability law, a clear drawback to the legislation was the time needed to complete "a lot more paperwork." While trying to implement 2272 in a way that made sense for their district, there was no denying that administrators felt the extra burden: "Just in three years the amount of paperwork has stepped up....The Comprehensive School Improvement Plan continues to grow in scope and in the amount of information you put in; so my role as an administrator seems more."

Numbers game. Though interviewees in District A were not interested in playing a "numbers game" with test scores and other measures of a district's accountability, educators here saw the potential for that to happen as pressure is applied to schools across the state: "Sometimes what you put on paper isn't necessarily what you do in the classroom." While there was no feeling that would happen here, they were concerned that

instances of score or testing manipulation that have occurred around the nation could happen more frequently in Iowa if pressure to show increases in student achievement becomes more intense.

Feeling distrusted. Teachers and administrators in District A clearly felt they were on the right track with their school improvement processes before HF 2272 was passed. However, an interviewee described an unintended consequence of mandating improvement here:

It supplemented what we were already doing. I don't even know if I would use that verb. It maybe supported what we were already doing; it gave a framework for what we were already doing. In some regards it was a bit of a downer, because when you are doing it yourself and you know it's right, you kind of get that feeling of pride that we really are a learning community. And then when the mandates come it's like throwing cold water over a flame. I mean, you just start to feel like, ok they don't trust that we're doing this anyway. And it makes you a little angry....and it makes you get a little upset.

Recommendations to Policy Influentials

While these educators realize that a legislator's task is a daunting one, they did have suggestions for policy influentials: 1) don't make any more legislation, 2) be critical of data, 3) realize the immeasurable, and 4) involve educators in policy conversations.

No more legislation. When asked what they would recommend to legislators and policy influentials in regard to future policy efforts, the response from educators in District A was clear: "Don't make any more legislation. No more legislation. 2272 is enough, stop." From another administrator, the sentiment was similar: "I just hope there's not too much more...."

Be critical of data. "Teaching is more than data, and kids are more than test scores." That was the unmistakable view of educators who were actually using data to inform their decisions. While they administered assessments, collected data, and analyzed

the results to create action plans, teachers and administrators cautioned legislators and all citizens to be careful about rushing to judgment on the basis of scores that reflect a one-shot assessment of student learning. Seeing them as indicators of student learning and not as the end-all-be-all of teaching, those in District A hoped that legislators would take the time to learn about what can and cannot be inferred from data sets. They also hoped that data would be placed in the context of the local community and not used irresponsibly by lawmakers and state officials from afar.

Realize the immeasurable. The fact that HF 2272 focused narrowly on the reading, math, and science portion of a child's education was worrisome to some District A educators:

We're trying to focus on a well-rounded child, a happy child. You may not be always the best in reading or the best in math, but you are a good person, you're helpful to others, you're a good addition to your society. I don't know how we always can measure those.

Involve educators. When asked what recommendations they had for legislators, teachers and administrators alike hoped that legislators would get into several schools, spend time there, and talk with educators about their local needs. An administrator shared his recommendation to policy influentials:

I wish there were more local input into some of these decisions. I think one of the traditions that made Iowa strong is local control. Any time you give up local control to a far away group you weaken school improvement, and that scares me.

Others encouraged phone calls: "Talk to us if you can; don't be afraid to call the principals in your district and say, 'Tell me the things you're doing.'" Overall, the message from educators in District A seemed clear and simple; they believed legislators and policy officials needed to hear the voices of those in the field most likely to be affected by any new state legislation.

Site Report: District B

Background

Located in rural north central Iowa, District B is the heart of four communities whose population of approximately 3,800 people is spread out over 410 square miles. In this K-12 system of less than 700 students, there is one K-4 elementary, one 5-8 middle school, and one 9-12 high school; each is located in a different town in the district. At the time of these interviews, the ethnically homogeneous student body was 96% Caucasian, and 38% of its students were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches.

In these close-knit bedroom communities where the school system is the main employer, schools also serve as the central social centers. Whether attending sporting events, music or theater performances, open gym, or a soup supper, a high percentage of people in District B are drawn to the activities and social experiences a small town school system provides. Consequently, educators and students alike enjoy solid community support, as education is important to most everyone who lives here. The three area newspapers document this phenomenon, as fully half of their contents report school-related information on any given day.

Whether it is the "no-cut" policy throughout the district that encourages students to participate, there is definitely a strong culture of student involvement in District B. Unbelievably, 90% of their middle school students are involved in at least one extra-curricular activity, and 100% are in vocal music. At the high school level, 84% are involved in one activity outside of the classroom, and 72% are involved vocal music.

District B also has a tradition of academic excellence. At the time of the educator interviews, over 60% of the students that took the ACT scored 20 or above;

approximately 60% of secondary students were on the honor roll; and 100% of seniors reported that they planned to attend post secondary education or training. The district's ITBS and ITED scores were also higher than the national norms and at or above the Iowa norms in reading, math and science.

This familial environment did not spring up over night. In fact, in 1996, the district was \$650,000 in debt, cutting staff, and voting to reorganize its structure. After an amazing turnaround from the depths of severe debt and difficult decisions, five years later, District B passed a \$3.4 million bond issue with nearly 80% approval the first time around; enrollment has increased five out of the past six years; and taxpayers, students, and educators love their district.

Educators believe they owe their strong culture to broad invitations and participation in the community discussions that shaped the reorganized district after their financial difficulties. They literally saved their schools from being disbanded by the state, and now they are considered by many in the area to be one of the best small districts around. This was the context for the four administrator and six teacher interviews in District B.

Findings

Findings from District B are organized into eight categories: 1) community engagement and support, 2) historical school improvement efforts, 3) policy intent, 4) policy impact, 5) implementation barriers, 6) implementation supports, 7) unintended consequences, and 8) recommendations to policy influentials.

Community Engagement and Support

It was clear in District B that their communities had been engaged with and supportive of the school district for some time before 2272 required the creation of a School Improvement Advisory Committee and an Annual Progress Report: "Our parents have always been supportive, whether it's academic or extra curricular; that's just never been a problem." Whether that support was due to the district's attempts to reach out to its patrons is unknown, but there was little doubt that educators in District B believed it was important to do so:

We do a lot of advisory group things. We have a lot of different people in our communities and for over a decade we have laid those things out to make sure they're gender balanced, that we've got multicultural representation, and that we've got all issues about handicap accessibility covered. We've done that for a decade. So when that came out it was like, I thought everybody was doing that.

One teacher described her pride in the district's open parent communication channels:

I think we've always done a good job in our school system in reporting to our parents. I can speak for the elementary: not only do we report to the parents through report cards, but before-school conferences, school conferences, phone calls, and visiting on the street uptown. I guess a lot of that's a small community, though, too.

Efforts to report important information to community members were well underway in District B by the time House File 2272 was enacted:

I really believe this district does a good job of getting word out to the public....We report out in a number of different ways using media, we have a school calendar that has all the data on it, we use the local cable access channel, and we have kids read things at concerts and that type of thing.

An administrator elaborated on the point:

The way we report to the public, we do a lot of the coffee shop kind of things, the after church kind of sessions; our annual report is on the flip pages of a school calendar that people hang on their walls, so it's in their face all the time. We don't do a huge spread in that goes out to every taxpayer in the district because so

many of those end up in the garbage. We try to do the things that are probably as impactful and get the biggest bang for the buck that we can.

Historical School Improvement Efforts

Educators in District B believed they had a history of solid school improvement efforts and were well-positioned to accept the new challenges set forth by the requirements of House File 2272:

[In our AEA] I think we were at a point where we had done seven or eight years of work prior to that, and that really kind of prepared us for it....I think that allowed us to gear up faster once we realized what 2272 was all about because we'd already built the ground work....

Some of that preparation included encouraging teachers to take facilitator training. Other trainings were also underway: "We kind of prepared ourselves a couple years in advance by taking classes on alternate assessments and Six Traits of Reading, Six Traits of Writing, and all those types of things." Another remarked:

I don't think our district's different at all from where we would've been. I think we were moving in this direction anyway.... We already had a tremendous Design Team and a very well-structured, focused staff development plan. However, when 2272 came down the pike it caused us to tweak it a little bit. It's like the tuning of a piano. Piano sounds ok until you can compare it to after it's been tuned and then you go back and hear what it sounded like before--there's a difference there. And I think this allowed us to tune that piano a little tighter.

While they felt prepared to move forward in implementation, there was some frustration with the perceived emphasis on the school improvement process, rather than on the students themselves:

Papers, scores, charts, graphs--those are all wonderful and they have bearing. And when we sit down and we do the ITBS item analysis, we're not comparing kids; we're looking systemically. Those are things we were already doing, and some of them do have a tremendous amount of merit. But when they take precedence over the little guy down the hall who didn't get breakfast today, and Mom and Dad are getting a divorce, there's something wrong with the system here.

Another frustration was expressed by a teacher who believed that true school improvement and action research efforts were already occurring in District B, making legislative policy unnecessary:

I would say six years ago, when kids were coming up, I could see that they were lacking some basic things in reading. In our elementary meetings we brought this up with our principal--something is missing; something isn't happening that needs to be happening. So we started looking to see where our kids were lacking. Phonics was a big one. We didn't need 2272. I mean, if you have administrators and evaluators that are sincerely doing their job, they're going to catch this stuff. If you have teachers that are really concerned about what's going on in their classroom, they're going to pursue that kind of stuff without somebody telling them to.

Policy Intent

Educators in District B described a variety of reasons the Iowa legislature may have enacted HF 2272: 1) to increase accountability for tax dollars, 2) to increase accountability for student achievement, 3) to respond to federal pressure, 4) to maintain Iowa's reputation for educational excellence, 5) to identify ineffective schools, 6) to standardize reports to local communities, and 7) to indirectly consolidate schools.

Financial accountability. Teachers and administrators overwhelmingly believed the central intent behind this state policy was to make educators accountable. There was a distinction, however, between accountability for taxpayer dollars and accountability for student achievement. In terms of financial accountability, one perception was that "the legislature, who was writing the check, was representing taxpayers who were finally saying, 'Ok, what are we getting for our money's worth here?'"

Accountability for student achievement. Educators expressed the belief that policy influentials had a desire to improve schools by increasing the accountability for student achievement. Teachers believed that processes such as identifying standards and

benchmarks and setting goals for student achievement were meant “to make the schools accountable and hopefully to probably improve the success of schools.” One interviewee perceived that “The intent of the legislation was to hold schools accountable for student achievement and improving student achievement,” while another concluded:

I think [2272 was meant] to encourage myself, along with the rest of the teachers in our district to evaluate our curriculum, to take a look at where we’re going, where we’ve been, how we can improve curriculum, to set goals, to work on standards and benchmarks. I guess those would be probably the main focus.

While educators believed they should be held accountable, one teacher shared her personal view of accountability:

Being accountable to the state isn’t what our job should be. We need to be accountable to our students. If they’re not learning then we need to work and teach them. We don’t need to tell the state that the student is improving or getting better or I’m doing this to help that student. I think our first responsibility is to the student and we need to be accountable to them. We need to be accountable to the parents; they should see the progress in their student. We need to be accountable to our principals, you know, our principals need to be doing the checking on us. If we’re not doing what we’re supposed to be doing and not doing what we’re supposed to be teaching they need to come to us. I don’t think [it’s necessary] the state mandating all this and having to report to the state, which does not know our students or our school system. It’s worthless. Our first priority is our students.

Federal pressure. In addition to making them more accountable, educators in District B shared the sentiment that the federal Department of Education likely played a role in the passage of HF 2272. Most believed the pressure was in the form of meeting requirements to access federal funds. As an interviewee explained: “the state people were having to meet with the feds and some of the requirements with the federal monies and legislation. I feel like that was the whole thing that just kind of lead to 2272.” A colleague expressed similar thoughts: “I think some of it was following along with federal expectations, mandates. It was, ‘Head this direction or do like a lot of states and just have state imposed standards, state testing and those type of things.’”

Maintain Iowa's reputation. Interviewees thought it was likely that legislators wanted to maintain Iowa's reputation as a state known for educational excellence, and in the current climate of national accountability, "excellence" is frequently defined as having high test scores. Consequently, educators in District B perceived that legislators enacted HF 2272 as a way to increase norm-referenced standardized test scores, specifically on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED). One teacher stated that "Iowa, like everybody else, wants to be at the top [of test scores] and we've seen us falling in the past few years." Another said, "from what I've read and heard, Iowa has slipped a little as far as the national standings, and I was wondering if that wasn't one of the things that kind of spurred them on to create this." A colleague surmised, "Well, I think people are worried that test scores and things like that have gone down and they're trying to improve test scores." A frustrated teacher shook her head and commented, "just because test scores are going down--that's all they care about. Test scores, test scores, test scores. And I just cannot believe that forcing kids to do more tests is actually going to improve education."

Identify ineffective schools. There was some thought that legislators intended for the policy to serve as a mechanism to identify ineffective schools. One administrator said, "I think part of it was to expose some needy schools--some schools that were low performing." Another administrator concurred, "I think eventually it'll show those that really do need some help, which is a very small percentage of Iowa schools."

Report to local communities. In District B there was some support for the idea that the legislation was meant to standardize what is reported to local communities in the state of Iowa: "I think it was intended for the public schools to consistently report out to

their public--how they're doing on standardized tests, how they're doing academically, what their goals are, annual and long range."

School consolidation. While not a universal presumption of legislative intent, District B administrators were suspicious about some policy makers' hidden agenda: "I think some of the pressure at the legislative level came from the fact that they realize there are way too many high schools that have only seven or eight kids graduating, and they want to close them." Another stated, "Well, I think they think that there's too many school districts in Iowa and this is one way to put pressure on them to consolidate or whole grade share or whatever." In an even broader view of the situation, another administrator commented, "part of me says that there's an underswell of political pressure out there to do away with public schools. At least as we know them."

Policy Impact

House File 2272 impacted District B in a variety of ways including 1) increased the amount of student assessment, 2) pushed school improvement efforts faster, 3) refocused attention on reading and math, 4) identified community reporting requirements, 5) increased data use, 6) articulated curricula, and 7) made students aware of achievement results.

More assessment. Perhaps the most intense impact of the legislation on educators in District B was the requirement to assess and report student achievement with multiple measures in addition to the ITBS/ITED in reading, math, and science. While those interviewed believed the results could be useful, there was no escaping a teacher's frustration with getting those results; teachers often felt that teaching time was being replaced by assessment time: "With all the assessment going on, we wonder often when

we're teaching." Another echoed that feeling: "Do you know how many assessments I gave in April? We could've just as well taken the month off and done our assessments."

There was also concern for students who struggle as test-takers:

I'm a little bit worried that they're getting way too much of it. Way too much of it. They have it in reading, they have it in math; now they have it in science again. And I don't know, it's an awful lot. We really got loaded down in April because we had to do so many assessments; it was just overwhelming. And I can see students, on the very low end anyway, getting very frustrated with stuff like that.

And the poor kids. I mean, I know what this is all about. But all of the sudden, you start throwing these things at the kids boom, boom, boom; just because we need some assessments to report out on? Hah uh. No. That shouldn't be the driving force.

In order to avoid having external tests unrelated to curricular goals, District B chose to aggregate classroom assessment results to meet state reporting requirements. While teachers agreed that using these assessments in class was useful for instructional purposes, there was dissatisfaction with the idea that those results would be reported to the public and used as a measure of school effectiveness:

I think there's some real substance to a lot of this stuff, but as far as reporting out and using it as a measure of where or what your school district is doing, I really question that...we sit and question, "Where is this taking us? What are the benefits to our students?"

Finally, the cost associated with meeting the requirements for increased student assessment was also frustrating for teachers:

I don't like seeing millions and billions of dollars put into assessment. I'd like to have a little more funding to help these kids learn their math facts. Let's work on how they [perform] on their assessments instead of [developing] the assessments.

Pushed school improvement efforts faster. Teachers and administrators in District B acknowledged that House File 2272 likely moved their school improvements efforts forward more quickly: "I think it supplemented what we were already doing. Maybe sped it along a little more." Along those lines, another commented, "I mean, we probably

had had some things started, but, of course, that gives you a little time frame on when everything needs to be done and makes you move maybe a little faster than you'd like to." An administrator reflected on the process:

It maybe spurred us in a couple of areas to do some things that we probably wouldn't have done in that order. And maybe it spurred us to do some things that we were doing more rapidly and overlapped. I mean, we were juggling so many balls at one time. We probably would've taken it in a much more sequential order had we been doing it ourselves.

Refocused attention on reading and math. House File 2272 also impacted District B by refocusing attention on reading and math (in that order), as required by the legislation. While they said reading and math were priorities before the law was passed, educators began to focus their efforts on how to report the reading and math achievement of students in a way they had not done before. This required the creation of assessment systems for K-12 reading and K-12 math.

Through the development of the district-wide reading and math assessments, many educators began to see the need to become teachers of reading and math, regardless of their level or content area: "And we've started talking about everyone being a language arts teacher; everyone being a math teacher. What can we do to support the other disciplines goals within our own classrooms?" A teacher reiterated that belief: "We're all teachers of reading, no matter what we teach. I think that's one of the things we're going to work on next year is training for everybody on reading, how to teach reading." Another concurred, "Around the assessment pieces...I think it made us push the envelope a little bit as far as reading across the curriculum K-12; some of those things probably would've been a little slower evolving."

Refocused staff development. While school improvement efforts had been going on in District B for years with the guidance of its Area Education Agency, educators commented that House File 2272 caused a refocusing of staff development around implementing action plans to attain improvement goals in reading, math and science. Said one administrator, "We're more focused on not only setting goals but on an action plan for working towards those goals." Similarly, a teacher stated, "I think our in-services are more focused than they used to be. We used to have a lot of bits of this and bits of that, and now we kind of all heading in the same direction." An administrator summed it up most succinctly: "we do write action plans and follow them, that's all there is to it. If it's not in there, we're not doing it."

Reporting format. While District B had been reporting student progress and other information to its community members on a regular basis for years before HF 2272, educators perceived the state was overstepping its bounds by telling them what to report to its community in its Annual Progress Report. Believing they were in the best position to determine what its community needed and wanted to know, some felt knowledge of their patrons had been superceded by state policy requirements: "I don't think we would be doing the reports that we're doing now and sending them to the people we're sending them to. But I think that the concepts--we were already moving in this direction."

There was also concern expressed that the required reported information would encourage school district comparisons while overshadowing information each district believed to be important:

It's [the Annual Progress Report] still a checklist. And that doesn't tell you the personality in the building. It doesn't talk about the culture of the building....We didn't have anybody ineligible for athletics last year...we have almost 60% of our kids involved in band or chorus programs....Sure you can report that, but who

cares? That's us, that's who we are, and we're different from everybody else. To compare us to a Hoover or a Mason City or a Sioux City, that's not a fair comparison, and yet, that's what it ends up being is a report card process....I'm a local control guy. I figure the people paying the bill are the people need to know what's going on. And the sending of the reports to the Des Moines Register I think is a tremendous waste of administrative time and takes time away from kids.

Increased data use. Educators were clear that more time was spent analyzing and using student achievement results after the passage of House File 2272. Though teachers had always been interested in how individual students were achieving in their classrooms and used assessment data to improve instruction, that view expanded to include a more conscious awareness of K-12 district-wide student progress: "I think looking at the whole school district rather than just worrying about your kids, seeing the whole...." As one administrator reflected: "We spend a lot more time looking at data. We're definitely data driven and we're always asking ourselves, 'Is this quality data? Does it tell us what we want to know, what we're wondering about in terms of student achievement?'"

Another administrator recalled his experiences with standardized testing:

And ITEDs have been given for years and years. In my experience, as a teacher and as a student, you took a few days within your class or your classroom, the teachers delivered them. There may or may not have been consistency in how those were administered, you filled in your little bubbles and the school district looked at them from within, but no one outside really understood or knew what they were used for. Where now we spend a lot of time explaining to different committees what this percentile means and what these numbers mean and what we should be using the test scores for and what we shouldn't be using them for. So that's just another responsibility that's been placed on, in some districts the building principal, in other districts maybe curriculum coordinator.

In District B, an administrator shared the student achievement data with students for the first time and expressed his feelings about using data in the district:

Now I think it's a matter of further educating the public and the students. Which is why I did talk to all the middle school students this year. It's not enough just for teachers to know [achievement results], or me to know, kids should know and their parents should know, and community members should know.

Articulated curriculum. One way District B was impacted by 2272 was in the requirement to establish standards and benchmarks. Educators here believed the resulting curriculum articulation was a valuable process that allowed them to understand more clearly what was being taught at each grade level. As one teacher explained, "There are some things I think have really been good, because it has forced us to sit down and look at how our curriculum is aligned." Another confirmed that thought:

I think that this probably brought us back a little bit more to that vertical articulation so we know what's expected at some of the grade levels and what's being taught and how you can expand on that a little bit in the upper grades.

Made students aware of achievement results. As House File 2272 made reporting norm-referenced standardized student achievement results a requirement, District B began to think about ways to discourage student test-taking apathy and encourage students to do their best on the ITBS and ITED. To that end, the curriculum coordinator shared information with groups of students including the district goals in reading, math, and science, student achievement results from the previous year, and recent student scores from the current year. Educators found that having the information increased student motivation to do well on the tests in order to improve over the previous year's scores. One administrator recalled initial questions about motivating students to put forth their best efforts on tests:

Do we need to give them some kind of reward for doing well on the test? We've consistently said 'no', that's not what it's about. But what we're doing is giving the students the information about our school improvement plan and where they see themselves and how we see them on these measures with relation to our goals and what they're possibly going to have for a goal next year...What I've found out this year is the kids hadn't always realized, and there are still some students that don't realize, why we are taking these assessments. Why is this being collected? What's the importance? Not all of them have it hooked into the bigger picture. And that's why we started reporting to the students and explaining it and

so forth....And I think it's very motivating for them....If nothing else, I think it eliminates the fear that we used to have that students would just come in and make the Christmas tree symbols, or whatever. It has enough meaning to them and they want to see a change in the results enough that I think they'll do their best without us giving them a lot of pep talks, pressure, pizza parties, or popcorn--none of that kind of stuff. It's just the information.

Implementation Barriers

Educators in District B identified four barriers that hindered the implementation of HF 2272: 1) time, 2) teacher resistance, 3) the nature of an external mandate, and 4) unclear state expectations.

Time. Educators frequently mentioned time as a barrier to policy implementation, through comments fell into two related subcategories: time to do the work of school improvement, and timelines, which were perceived to be somewhat unrealistic. For teachers, developing and scoring the required district-wide assessments and completing the accompanying paperwork related to it was one of the most time consuming aspects of implementing 2272: "Well, I mean the paperwork, you know, coming up with the assessment for the Six Trait Reading. Writing your questions, that all takes time." Another teacher added, "So we got to get things in order, but you still have to teach every day. There's no more time in the day or days in the year."

Administrators also shared that more time was needed for implementation: "And it's taken a lot of resources, a lot of time, a lot of money to get that done. We have a lot of staff development days. And we're using every minute." Similarly, "And we don't have to sit and wonder at all what we're going to do. I mean we have way more stuff to do than we have time to get it done."

While there was a general feeling that "Timelines have been a barrier," there was also some question about the wisdom of moving too quickly:

Sometimes you have to go slow to go fast....Sometimes when you put things in place and you're just doing it because you have to do it and you're doing it quickly; you can make mistakes that take a long time to fix...When you say two years or whatever, that gives us 20 days to work on it. When you think staff development days, there's not enough time to get it done.

Teacher resistance. Typically change brings with it some degree of resistance; District B that was no different. Though identified as an "active district," past reform efforts may have blunted the enthusiasm of some in District B to implement more policy:

I've been in it long enough that I have seen so many programs come and go that I really get leery about immersing myself in it and going gung ho. I learn to take what will work for me from it, because usually there are some things that are valuable, but not everything.

Others didn't see the need for change:

I think a lot of the barriers were from within. Teachers and others that didn't really see the need, or that this was the next thing that was just going to go away. Anybody that's been in education for very long has seen a lot of those.

This active district was not immune to the resistance: "Plus, we have a lot of teachers who are nearing retirement age, like me, who really don't want to change any more than we have to (chuckle). I guess that's just being honest." However, it is worth noting that teacher reluctance to be more accountable by "proving with numbers what they're doing" is not necessarily the same as having a bad attitude, as this administrator described: "I think they were asked to change and do things differently, which I don't see as having a bad or poor attitude; I saw resistance to change."

External mandate. As a policy that was created in Des Moines and forced on them from the outside, educators identified the external nature of the mandate as a barrier to its implementation. An administrator said, "Unfortunately, I think a lot of people are, regardless of what the changes are, going to see them as something imposed from outside because of 2272. I don't know if that's always the best motivator." Interestingly, when

an interviewee was asked whether educators in District B were more capable and willing to take on new changes, the response was that they were "more willing to be compliant."

The value of choosing to make changes seemed to be important to educators in District B, as one teacher indicated: "It wasn't a choice, and then you don't do things as willingly as you might have." An administrator echoed the sentiment:

And perceptions are reality, and the perception of those folks was this was all being done to us, not by us. And I think policy makers at any level, myself included, should realize that people have to be part of the process, it can't be done to them and be effective.

Others perceived the nature of an external mandate was an implementation barrier because little commitment is secured for someone else's goals: "You kind of get so you want to get your foot in and you want to do it, but in the long run you're not sure that it's being done for the right reasons." An administrator hypothesized:

...there still can be this resentment sometimes from staff that we're just doing this because it's required. Sometimes that external stuff gets in the way of them really thinking about the purpose and the reason why this is good to do and put in place.

Unclear state expectations. Finally, educators perceived the implementation of HF 2272 was hampered by a lack of clear expectations and direction from state officials:

Well, barriers I can think of right now would be people not exactly knowing what we need to have. Through three years we would get different information from different people, and I think that they honestly didn't know. The state probably didn't know until some of these plans started coming in and being used....So I think that was kind of a barrier--we would hear different information on different days from different people, and it was really confusing for a while as far as what we could have or what we could use....Your multiple assessments, exactly what they were or what kinds you had to have; that just drove us absolutely crazy for a long time.

Well, I don't think that the state had a clear picture of what they wanted when we started in this process because they were learning as they went along. So, I would say one of the barriers was kind of a fuzzy goal to begin with and trying to have to figure that out. Another thing would be it depended on who you spoke to--everybody had a different picture.

Others expressed similar frustrations:

We were just told this is what we had to do. And no one at the time, even the people we were turning our reports in to, could give us an answer on what they wanted. It seemed like they were waiting to get some in so they could look at them and then come back and say, 'Yeah, this is what we want and this is what we don't want.' They told us what they wanted in terms of data, but they never really told us what form they wanted it in. We were never really given a whole lot of direction on how in-depth we were to go. I know some school districts literally turned in boxes of pages of stuff, and other school districts turned in just a few pages that had the correct percentile numbers on there and other indicators that they wanted. But I know when we were first working through the process we were looking for answers, information, what you wanted to see, what form do you want it in, and we could never get an answer from anyone... [Through] the whole process they've been changing the wheels on the bus as it's going down the road, and...I think it puts a lot of stress on the teaching staff.

Frustration on the part of educators expected to implement an unclear policy emerged in these comments: "It's been a struggle because we can't figure out how they want these goals written. They'll say, 'This is not acceptable.' Well, this is the goal we want. Now, why isn't it acceptable if that's what we need?" Another states:

We tried initially just to make contacts with the Department of Education and we really didn't get an answer on what they wanted. So, I really saw a lot of it as they said, "This is what you have to do, you figure out how you're going to do it." So, you're kind of flying solo.

Implementation Supports

In addition to their tradition of effective school improvement, educators in District B recognized four factors that supported their attempts to implement the new Iowa accountability law: 1) district leadership, 2) the local Area Education Agency, 3) staff development opportunities, and 4) collegial networks.

Leadership. Prior to and during the implementation of 2272, teachers, administrators, and the district's internal Design Team successfully led District A's school improvement efforts. Shared decision-making was a reality in District B long

before House File 2272, and the fundamental mechanism for utilizing this process was an internal group of teachers, administrators, and an AEA representative called the "Design Team." An administrator described its role:

The Design Team makes a lot of the decisions around implementation and that connection between our school improvement plan and staff development and looking at data; although now they've kind of broadened that out so the whole staff is involved in the process.

A common sentiment was that "The Design Team has been instrumental." An educator described the team's leadership role:

Our Design Team has really kind of taken the lead there....They set our goals for the year long and for the long-range goals. And they look at the data and they make determinations on what is needed for staff development and they kind of set up a plan and then the administrative team kind of fleshes the plan out.

The team seemed to operate with the understanding that it was necessary to have those closest to the decision involved in making it:

But I think that was a good tool for getting this thing rolling....They kind of lead, but they do let us make our decisions. The science department needs to make science decisions; the math department needs to make the math decisions; they aren't forcing us into any kind of a role. And I think the Design Team really helps in that way.

The Design Team supported the administrators' conscious decision to approach the implementation of House File 2272 by involving staff members in setting student achievement goals and creating staff development action plans: "You know, we're not going to make all the decisions, we can't." Another administrator recalled,

It was either the curriculum coordinator and the administrators were going to do all the work and then impose it on the faculty or we're all going to do this together. And we decided that working together as an entire team was going to be a lot more beneficial in the long run. It would've been a lot shorter if we would've just sat down and did the "thou shalts" and passed it down, but I think our results are better because of the process we've taken. It's taken longer, it's been more laborious and (chuckle) there've been conflicts and those type of things.

Administrators also decided to share the responsibility for school improvement amongst each other: "And here very much it's a shared responsibility with the entire administrative team. Everybody does curriculum, everybody does school improvement; it's not the job of one person." This shared decision making model was the foundation for implementation efforts in District B.

Interpreting state policy requirements was also one of the roles of local leadership. Administrators continually attempted to reframe state policy requirements while keeping the best interests of the students central to implementation:

I always try to bring the conversation back to what's best for kids, and what's best for us and don't we want to increase student achievement? I hate saying, 'Well, we have to do this.' I really do, because I think it just puts their focus on going through the motions and doing it because somebody else says we have to and it's just not good.

In our district, the way we approach it is as mandates come down, we read the mandates, we call the DE, we run and meet them half-way and tell them this is how we plan to implement this--rather than have it forced down your throat.

Area Education Agency support. A clear theme emerged as teachers and administrators readily admitted, "We got a lot of help from the AEA." Whether it was helping to identify, implement, or develop alternate assessment measures, providing support for networks, informing and guiding local leadership, or helping educators see the "big picture," the local AEA was a significant support to implementing 2272. As an administrator reflected, "Well, our AEA was very strong. I can't say enough about the experiences that I had at the AEA and then how that helped me see more a holistic approach to the whole process."

Staff development. While the lack of time was viewed as a barrier to policy implementation, the provision of staff development time to work on implementing parts

of the policy was, not surprisingly, seen as a support. During that time, teachers appreciated the opportunities the district provided to move forward with implementation:

And I think the district was really helpful. Like I said, bringing in AEA staff, bringing in teachers from other schools that have been using it, allowing us time, bringing in subs so that we can visit and learn more and do that correcting [scoring assessments], letting us take it slowly, making our schools' expectations of what we have to have accomplished by when really clear. That's been real helpful.

Collegial networks. Educators in District B believed that the existences of and their participation in collegial networks supported the implementation of HF 2272. An administrator recalls the network's value for her:

And then I tell you what we had in this AEA - the superintendents and the high school principals and middle school principals have a wonderful network. And while that's a very lonely position to be in, it's a wonderful fraternity of people who are very open, very honest about successes and failures.

Another shared that she was doing "...a lot of networking that I'm doing informally with people that I know." Teachers also mentioned that getting together with other teachers of their subject areas "...has been really helpful."

Unintended Consequences

While HF 2272 may have had some positive impact on District B, there were unintended consequences of the policy as well. In District B, those unintended consequences included 1) perceived loss of local control, 2) increased stress on educators, 3) increased stress on children, 4) increased educator workload, and 5) decreased educator morale.

Loss of local control. The strong tradition of local control is not something taken lightly in District B, and educators there perceived that 2272 was quickly encroaching on that tradition. While recognizing that the legislature might have tried to "...show some

semblance of local control" by requiring each district to choose their own content standards and benchmarks rather than imposing them from the state level, there was no denying that this small district felt their ability to make decisions about the education of their kids was superceded by Des Moines:

If they want true implementation, it's like the Queen Mary or a rowboat. You know, [District B] is a rowboat. We can do lots of things; we can maneuver around and get into lots of little coves, and the Queen Mary, in the state of Iowa, can't get into the little coves. Well, who's delivering the service? Who's touching the kids? Those are the folks that need to help make the decisions. I realize that's somewhat of a utopian approach to it, but for anything to be effective and have lasting impact, it's going to have to come from those people at the bottom who have to believe in it. Those people that touch those kids every day.

There was also a shared feeling that perhaps the legislature wasn't the only driving force behind the diminishing local control:

I just always get the feeling that the things that are coming out of the federal legislation are driving what's coming out of state legislation, which filters down to a local level. We kind of have pseudo local control right now. We have as much local control as they allow us to have.

Similarly, there was pervasive frustration with the increasing proportion of federal requirements for the funding received. An administrator lamented, "if you look at those checklists for the CSIPs [Comprehensive School Improvement Plans], and they highlighted which ones of 'em are required by the federal government, it's like 80% of that document for 6% of our money."

While educators believed 2272 was facilitating the loss of local district control, they also perceived that the legislature was trying to give the impression that districts still had some. As one teacher shared, "I mean, they are saying this in theory that every district will have local control, but they want everything to look the same from all districts." Another teacher passionately expressed her thoughts:

I guess we feel to a certain degree that we're being led by a ring through the nose through lots of hoops....The big thing is local control, and I think that is such a bunch of bologna. That's not happening, and the state is there saying you will be accountable for this, you will be accountable for that; go do something about it.

One teacher summed up her feelings about local control: "I think they're afraid to give us too much control."

More stress on educators. Teachers felt that implementing the requirements of 2272 increased their level of stress, primarily because their time is diverted from planning for teaching in order to meet the requirements. Several described the frustration of spending time on implementing requirements rather than being able to spend time on enhancing their classroom teaching activities: "You have things that you need to be teaching, and instead you have to stop and do this." General frustration was also expressed: "I get so frustrated because it seems like it never gets easier, each year; it's always more (laughter). More on your lap."

Administrators recognized the pressure on teachers (and themselves) associated with reporting student achievement to a statewide audience:

I think they feel that if it comes out and that fourth grade group does take a dip in reading, or heaven forbid the tenth grade takes a dip in reading, all the sudden the high school teacher is to blame. And this isn't part of being a blame game; this is a part of being a problem solver.

Administrators also identified increased stress as a consequence for many in their positions across the state:

There are certain things that make you a good school district and there are certain things that will cost you your job. The things you do as an administrator especially to help create a wonderful learning environment aren't the things that get reported on a sheet of paper that goes to somebody. However, the things that go on a sheet of paper that go to people are the things that are going to cost someone their job. Now, personally I was looking for a job and I found this one. (laughter) And I sometimes do way too many things from the heart instead of from the head. When in reality I think that is what school is about. Not

everybody views the world with the same eyes that I do that are security issues for some folks. I think it causes a tremendous amount of anxiety amongst some administrators when I go to meetings and I hear their conversations and they're concerned because the fourth grade took a dip in reading. And whose fault is it going to be? And I think that's exactly the wrong approach to take. [Instead you should] take the information that you've got, define a plan, you move forward, you assess it as you go, you tweak it along the way and you pave a better road.

More stress on children. Perhaps one of the most disturbing unintended consequences educators identified was the increased stress placed on children as a result of more frequent district-wide assessment of their progress: "And the kids hate it. You always have those kids that really get into test taking, but a lot of them don't like it, it's stressful." A Title I teacher recounts her experiences with student testing:

I just feel sorry for my kids. And I'll try to prepare them and say "You're not coming up to read with me tomorrow because you're going to stay in your classroom with your teacher. And I'm frank with them: "Your teacher has a test that you have to do and you have to work really hard. And it's going to be really hard and I don't want you to get stressed out about it; you just do your best and that will be ok." The kids I work with are not good test takers, and Six Traits of Reading [district assessment] is often a lot of writing, and a lot of my kids that have problems reading, their writing goes along with it, too....I've been in the classroom and they'll cry. It just breaks my heart.

Increased workload. Though House File 2272 was being actively implemented in District B, an unintended consequence of this implementation was the increased workload for teachers and administrators. Meeting the requirement of implementing multiple assessment measures seemed to be one of the biggest tasks to accomplish: "And then when we came up with our criterion based assessments, that was a laborious task, too." A teacher described aligning curriculum to benchmarks as another time commitment resulting from 2272: "And we also have to check on reading--what benchmarks are being met by those lessons. So that has been for me a huge load to add to what I'm already doing."

Administrators' workloads were certainly not immune to the impact of policy implementation, as this administrator explains: "Eats up right around 20% of the day...it pulls me away from the kids more than it should."

Decreased morale. Another serious consequence of policy implementation was the seeming decrease in educator morale. Teachers say they take these policy requirements as personal affronts and sometimes feel they are being accused of not doing their jobs well. As a teacher explains, "Sometimes I take offense when it's just like well, I'm not doing my job, and I feel like I am. I'm trying as hard as I can. (chuckle) But you do sometimes you take it personally." Conversely, teachers recognize they are a public entity: "I feel like I work for what I earn. I truly feel I earn my pay. But you know, when you're working for the public like that you do feel kind of like you're under a microscope at times."

Sadly, one teacher's comment was not uncommon: "It's just seems like it's gotten worse instead of better. Just getting very, very frustrating to be a teacher." A colleague elaborated on her feeling:

There's been a lot of raising salaries as much as possible, which doesn't seem to be getting us anywhere. But, I know every time I even see a student teacher, we've had some in our school now, they end up not wanting to be a teacher. It's too hard. And this is not making it easier.

Recommendations

Educators in District B realized that being a legislator or policy influential is difficult work. However, they did make some recommendations in regard to future policy implementation and design including: 1) involve educators in the policy design process, 2) fund what is mandated, and 3) allow local flexibility in implementation.

Involve educators. The most frequent recommendation from educators was to involve them in conversations around policy decisions: "...whatever's being discussed down there, call some [educators] from a couple of your districts and say, 'Here's what we're discussing; what do you think?'" Another recommendation was to "Get the people that really are the decision makers involved in the process....Get the grass roots involved; go out there to where they are - don't expect them to come to you." Educators also hoped legislators would "talk to people in the field and find out what's needed. I think they'd learn a lot and we probably would too in the process...if there were more cooperation and discussion and a lot less legislation and implementation."

An administrator summed up her feelings on involving educators in decision-making:

I think if they would listen to districts. Listen to what our needs are. If they would recognize our expertise and professionalism and ask us some questions and listen - we need the resources and the supports in place so that we can make a real difference and make real change happen in our districts. And I think if it were more of a cooperative effort, and it always works better then somebody sitting outside of us without all of the information trying to fix us and not knowing exactly what's wrong, number one, or what we need in order to fix it.

Fund mandates. There was general agreement that the state of Iowa will need to put its money where its policies are if education is to improve. Not surprisingly, then, one common recommendation was, "Continue to give us funds. Keep the money coming, because it is one of the best things we have going in the state....Fund the mandates if you're gonna put them out there--help us to reach them. Another administrator shared her frustration regarding broader mixed legislative messages:

I think the legislature really holds the purse strings. I think they send some mixed messages. Yes, they want quality but don't really want to pay for the quality. Yes, you have to make sure you do these things, but we're not going to fund them. No we're not going to allow you to have a budget guarantee anymore, but

we do expect you to maintain the same quality. I mean, that's a whole mixed message. Either close the dang schools or fund 'em.

Allow flexibility. Educators in District B were eager for the chance to tailor their own implementation of policy and requested that the state, "be flexible," and have "less strings attached" so they could determine what actions were necessary for their children and their communities. They urged policy makers to "use some common sense and flexibility, adaptability; I mean those are key words. Make it work for you, fine, but don't change so many things that we just are overwhelmed...." Educators seemed to feel that "One size does not fit all," and what was needed was:

A very clear focus and a very small number of goals. Just do a few things and do them very, very well. And then allow locals to develop their own process, and [have] people in place to assist them. What worked here in [District B] is not going to work everywhere.

Site Report: District C

Background

Located in rural central Iowa, the nearly 1,700 patrons of District C are distributed among three small towns. Because of its small enrollment, the district's approximately 300 students are combined with a neighboring district's student enrollment of over 150 to cooperate in a whole-grade sharing agreement. Each district houses one elementary building, while students in grades 6-8 attend middle school in the shared district and the 9-12 students attend high school in District C. Both the K-5 elementary and the 9-12 high school are housed in the same building, which is located in the country, rather than in one its three district communities.

With a teaching force of over 30, 2.5 FTE administrators, and a total of over 50 staff members, District C is the main employer of citizens in the area. The rest of the

patrons of District C are mainly blue-collar workers, while a growing proportion of them are older and retired. Most of those who do work in the area are farmers or are employed in the agriculture industry, while others travel to larger neighboring towns and earn a living through a variety of occupations.

Demographically, at the time of these interviews, 36% of the K-12 student population was eligible for free and reduced-price lunches, while 46% of elementary students were eligible. The ethnically homogeneous student body was more than 88% Caucasian and 11% of the student body was Hispanic.

District C has a tradition of excellence evidenced by external awards and internal data. District C is proud of their <1% drop-out rate and the fact that 86% of seniors reported that they plan to attend college in the fall. Another indicator of District C's tradition of excellence is its standardized test scores. At the time of the educator interviews, the average ACT score was just over 21. The district's ITBS and ITED scores were higher than the national average and right at to slightly higher than the state of Iowa's norms in reading and math. This was the context for the administrator and teacher interviews conducted in District C.

Findings

The findings from District C are organized into eight categories: 1) community engagement and support, 2) historical school improvement efforts, 3) policy intent, 4) policy impact, 5) implementation barriers, 6) implementation supports, 7) unintended consequences, and 8) recommendations to policy influentials.

Community Engagement and Support

As was the case with the other two districts in this study, District C seemed to have a strong base of community support and a history of exchanging information between the school and its patrons. A long-time administrator remarked they had been reporting student achievement information to the public since "way back in the early 70's." He went on to explain early community reporting efforts:

We reported to the community, and I don't think we had to add a whole lot to our annual report to the public once this went into effect because we were already doing it. Multiple measures, drop out rates, graduation rates, those were all kinds of things we were doing. Percentages of students going on to college were also reported.

District C was also acutely aware of the importance of getting community input. That awareness led to the development and dissemination of community, parent, staff and student needs assessments:

When I first came to [District C]...I wanted to make sure that the direction I was going was what the community wanted. And so we'd always do pretty extensive public attitude surveys. We made sure that we always had a very high response [rate]. I was never happy unless we had 100% from the faculty, 100% from the students, a good 75% from parents and 25-35% from the general public.

In a small community such as District C, whole-grade sharing and consolidation possibilities always loom on the horizon. In this situation, it was essential to gather and value community members input, as was done in this district:

We would ask them very leading questions before we ever started sharing services with anybody. We would ask a leading question like, "If we needed to provide students with more services, would you support sharing with a neighboring district?" And it was always good response for it. So the public always followed because they had input in it at the time they were making that decision.

As a result of these close community relationships, District C enjoyed strong community engagement and support before 2272 was ever legislated.

Historical School Improvement Efforts

Throughout the interviews, when teachers and administrators talked about their previous improvement efforts, three factors seemed to support those efforts and lay the foundation for future work: 1) a continuous improvement mentality, 2) a focus on culture and climate, and 3) goal setting and action planning.

Improvement mentality. When interviewed, staff members described their staff as “progressive,” usually on “the cutting edge,” and willing to do what was “best for kids.” Possessing this improvement mentality seemed to provide the foundation for the district’s school improvement efforts. An administrator shared her thoughts on working in that environment: “I guess one of the nice things about having worked in [District C] is the fact that we never felt we couldn’t do better.” A teacher also commented on the disposition of educators in District C: “I think we still would’ve had these same initiatives [without 2272] because our goal is to improve student learning. Our goal isn’t just to look good on ITEDs or look good on ITBS.”

Culture matters. Believing in the necessary presence of a positive culture and climate for student and adult learning was also a strong piece of the district’s improvement efforts. Working to institutionalize the type of environment where everyone respected each other’s opinions, felt comfortable taking risks, and avoided put-downs was a goal long before 1998. When asked what made the difference in her district, an educator replied:

I think it’s a dynamite staff with awesome leadership. And it was a culture and a climate of, “We’ll do what it takes to stay on the cutting edge and to stay out front.” We’ve always been risk takers--calculated risk takers....And as a teacher and as an administrator you’re given the freedom to do that and you’re given the freedom to fly. If districts struggle with that, they probably didn’t have that culture behind them and have never been allowed to do it....If you do have the

freedom to fly, then you may contribute to a more positive culture; if you don't have that freedom, then it just spirals down.

With the guidance of their AEA, District C also focused on creating a caring community and engaging curriculum for students and adults alike:

We had culture/climate study groups pretty heavy, and now we've kind of weaned ourselves off of them because it's become the norm--looking at creating a culture that's best for learning. I don't know if that was a success because of the mandate; I think it was an AEA initiative to really look at the caring community and an engaging curriculum. Every one of our AEA districts had a culture/climate goal....I think it's just the way we do business here. So, I don't know if things are a result of it or it's just that the way we do things.

Goals and plans. District C continued to build on their foundation by working on building and district goals and action plans before 2272 mandated they do so. Because of their prior work, they felt they were well-positioned to implement the new state policy. An administrator was clearly proud of their improvement tradition:

I think with the leadership that [our AEA] had, we were doing a lot of that. The transition for us wasn't nearly as difficult as other superintendents were telling me....I don't think we had to add a whole lot to our annual report to the public once this went into effect because we were already doing it....I always required the teachers to sit down and have a building goal, have a personal goal. The principals had to do it, I did it....We were always working towards something back then, so as we moved into the different phases of legislation, it was just a matter of twinkling what we were doing and going along with that. So I didn't see it as a big change....

A teacher agreed with that message: "I think that 2272 wasn't as shocking to us because we'd already been so much a part of [school improvement in our AEA]. It just seemed to all fit right into what we were already doing."

Policy Intent

Educators in District C identified three reasons they believed Iowa legislators enacted House File 2272 in 1998: 1) to increase accountability for student achievement, 2) to satisfy the federal Department of Education, and 3) to report to the public.

Increase accountability. The clearest understanding of legislative intent focused on increasing the accountability of teachers, schools, and districts to their community, the state, and the federal government: "I think it was to have greater accountability in schools; not only to the community but the government." Teachers and administrators alike perceived the intent of this state policy was to "set down some criteria to make schools accountable for student achievement."

Satisfy the feds. Related to accountability, most educators in District C felt this legislation was largely a response to the federal Department of Education's compliance demands for state standards, benchmarks and state testing: "The federal [Department of Education] put pressure on the state and the state put pressure on the districts." Another teacher elaborated:

I guess I assumed it came from a federal level because we were the only state that wasn't doing standards and benchmarks; therefore, we had to prove somehow that we're doing the same as everyone else. Otherwise, when we start failing, when we're not leading the pack anymore, how are we going to know what to do to improve? I guess I saw it as pressure from a federal level.

Public reporting. Several of those interviewed also perceived an intent behind 2272 was to cause districts in Iowa to report specific student achievement information to public audiences. They saw it as "a way of reporting to the members of the district and to our state and federal legislators how our students are doing--their progress, their student achievement." While educators in District C had been reporting information to their public for some time prior to 2272, they understood that:

Data from those tests would be sent down to the [Iowa] Department of Education on an annual basis as well as reported out locally to the community to let them know how the school is coming along on their district goals and how the goals are affecting the student achievement rate of the students.

There was also some suggestion that the intent of HF 2272 was to assist parents in making informed decisions about where to send their children to school. Requiring districts to provide more information, such as achievement scores, drop-out rates, and percent of students completing a core program of study would presumably allow parents to make an educated choice. A teacher thought of a question a parent might ask in that decision-making process: "Do I want to put my family in this district or that district? I don't know....I suppose you could use it [reported information] as a kind of filter and see what you liked about one particular district versus another."

Policy Impact

Though the legislation itself was less than one page in length, interviewees perceived the implementation of HF 2272 impacted the district in a number of ways: 1) focused attention on district-wide assessment, 2) gave specific direction to school improvement efforts, 3) pushed school improvement along, 4) increased use of data, and 5) influenced classroom instructional practices.

District-wide assessment focus. All interviewees discussed how the implementation of HF 2272 affected themselves, other teachers, administrators, and students by requiring the creation of a more comprehensive district-wide student assessment system. While they had been administering a variety of assessments including the ITBS and ITED before the legislation was enacted, District C was required to develop a criterion-referenced, constructed response measure of student achievement at some point in grades 3-12 for both reading and math. Because they wanted these district-wide assessments to be used in the context of classroom curricula and not become an unrelated test, the district chose to implement Creating Readers (from the federal North West

Regional Education Laboratory--NWREL) and Math Exemplars (based in Vermont). Language arts teachers in grades K-12 were trained to understand characteristics of quality student responses to assessments containing questions around a leveled text as identified by the Creating Readers framework. Similarly, K-12 math teachers were trained to understand the characteristics of the Math Exemplars rubric that described quality mathematical thinking. An educator described the professional development organized to implement the multiple assessment measures:

What we did the last two years is make a commitment at the district level of staff development time just for Creating Readers and Creating Writers. That's all we did...that was really for an alternate assessment that we felt good about. At the same time we also had study groups set up for Math Exemplars. And math people took part in that to actually explore this as an alternate assessment and look at ways that that could be implemented.

Developing the reading and math assessment system around Creating Readers and Math Exemplars wasn't a diversion from District C's pre-legislation philosophy. A few teachers had been trained in the frameworks and were using them as instructional activities and classroom assessments: "We started using Math Exemplars before 2272, but we weren't using it as a [district-wide] assessment. It was working well and we would've continued to do it without 2272, however, now it's just much more a part of our curriculum." To that extent, educators perceived they were already moving along the now-mandated path.

As with any change, implementing a more comprehensive assessment system in reading and math required a considerable amount of time, effort and support: "We did have study group money--Phase III money, to get together and score these [assessments]....which is a very tedious process. However, as we become more comfortable with it, it's getting quicker. And I use it all year long."

Though legislation emphasized reading and math (and eventually science), teachers who were not involved with the Creating Readers and Math Exemplars trainings studied quality assessment methods as well. Their learning was supported by the work of Dr. Rick Stiggins, and with that understanding, they developed quality assessments to assess their course benchmarks. When asked about why these staff development opportunities were offered to staff members, a teacher recounted:

These things came about because we wrote our action plans, which included student goals, and we implemented these initiatives to help us reach those goals. So they were actually in the action plan as in-service activities to meet those [student achievement] goals.

Provided direction. Though District C had a reputation for excellence, had been writing action plans, and had goals for student achievement, many educators believed the mandate's requirements to develop a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) provided more direction for the district. As an administrator recalled, "We were doing a good job, but a lot of times we didn't know why we were. Maybe it gave us a real blue print to follow." A teacher shared, "I just think it made us more precise in what we were doing and delineated for ourselves and for the community what we were supposed to do." A member of the Design Team supported that perspective:

Because I've served on the Design Team, I can see all the connected pieces maybe easier than other people. I think we're different just because we do have that direction. At the beginning of the year everybody knows exactly what we're going to be doing in in-services and why we're doing those in-services.

An administrator concurred:

It [CSIP] gives us something to actually look at and to really fall back on. A lot of our beliefs and a lot of the district's and the community's beliefs are all tied into that plan....It's a foundation for us to look at where we want to go, [to ask] what do we want to do and what do we want to be. It's that focus that makes it a little bit easier to make some of the decisions.

Pushed school improvement efforts. Educators in District C believed that while school improvement efforts were well underway there before 2272, the legislation caused those efforts to be stepped up. As an administrator noted, "A lot of the components were already in place....I think they [multiple assessments] were implemented at a deeper level because of the law." In addition, a Design Team member recalled her thoughts about the effects of the Iowa legislation:

I think it supplemented what we were doing, but I think it also made it very realistic in that it made us jump in maybe a little quicker. I think we were already starting, but maybe we were at a slow start and the mandates made us think we don't have five years to do this; we need to do it this year and get it done.

Increased data use. Teachers and administrators perceived that after HF 2272 was enacted, a greater emphasis was placed on using data for the process of school improvement, whether that was at the classroom or district level. In addition to the required reporting of specific district data in the Annual Progress Report, an administrator mentioned that he "...also uses it more. It comes up at a lot more in our faculty meetings...sharing it with staff." Another administrator confirmed that assertion but with some caution:

With mandated goals in reading and math and doing more data analysis, I think we're using data a lot more efficiently....The district could sit down and analyze where our weaknesses were and I think people put a lot more time into that data then they did before. I don't know if that's good or bad some days....However, I think people are becoming more and more efficient in crunching the numbers and therefore the numbers are becoming more informative.

When the same administrator was asked if she believed better data use had led to better teaching, she responded with a definite "No." Her rationale was clear:

I'm a firm believer that we have the best teachers in the nation, and they put that pressure on themselves daily. They don't need test scores to get that pressure. There's not one person that sits back and says, "Oh, if my basic skills scores go up, I'm not going to have to work hard; I'm not going to get any better next year."

I think they reflect daily, critique their teaching daily, and strive to improve student lives. And I don't think they need a test score to do that. It's an intrinsic thing.

Not everyone thought the increased focus on data was a good thing, as evidenced by the following quote:

I guess I'm disappointed in what's happening in our district, because it seems that we have become so much more number conscious and statistically driven....I'm just a bean counter. I'm much more aware of my students and how their reading scores are living up to what they supposedly should be.... I'm not sure that we're not more concerned with the numbers then we are with the people.

Influence on classroom instruction. Several educators perceived that HF 2272 did have an influence on classroom instruction, though that influence played itself out in a variety of ways. For example, teachers began selecting standards and benchmarks prior to the legislation, but the law's emphasis caused teachers to focus their instruction on them:

As we developed our standards and benchmarks, it gave a lot of clarity to what I was choosing to teach, because previous to that, your district bought the curriculum and you used the district curriculum. And yet, in the area of social studies and history you had to pick and choose from that, and I was not comfortable saying, "Ok, the Spanish-American War is not important to teach--I can skip that." And by narrowing it down with the standards and benchmarks I could justify what I taught. It realigned my thinking and aligned what I taught and why I taught it.

Another teacher explained her perspective on centering instruction on course standards and benchmarks:

I think our teachers for the most part at the high school level are a lot more focused on what our standards and benchmarks are and kind of teaching towards those standards and benchmarks a little bit....A teacher can sit down and say, "This is important." It takes a while, but I think that people are starting to buy into the fact that these are things [standards and benchmarks] that are important in their high school classroom. And that's what we're going to try and teach.

In addition to meeting state requirements, implementing the district-wide reading and math assessments also had an influence on classroom practices:

I'm in my fifth year of teaching Exemplars, and I have a really good handle now on what I need to do to help kids become better problem solvers and therefore, they'll be better at the Exemplar that they take it in the spring.

When asked about the assessment training and scoring, another teacher stated that she "definitely benefited from that," and "It made us more reliable assessors."

Teachers also used the constructed-response student assessment results to determine strengths and weaknesses of individuals and classes in order to choose appropriate instructional activities to meet student learning needs. One teacher felt it was an influential practice and commented, "It's driving my instruction."

Implementation Barriers

While they didn't dwell on the barriers to policy implementation, interviewees mentioned that unclear policy expectations and the lack of time to implement them hampered their efforts.

Unclear expectations. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges to making 2272 a reality was the lack of clear expectations for implementing the new Accountability law.

An administrator described the frustration of the inconsistent message:

I think one of the barriers was that for a while there, it appeared nobody knew what they were doing. We'd go to these meetings, not only at the AEA level, but at the state level, and you'd hear one thing one time and then another thing another time.

Another educator's perception confirmed this lack of solid direction:

The leadership will get you there if you know what the target is, and the target seems to move quite a bit and that's the part that gets frustrating. We haven't had a good chance to get a handle on much of the legislation; I mean...the rules keep changing so fast that you only do it one time and then all of the sudden the next year it's different. And so then you learn it a different way and then all the sudden the next year it's different again. So you never really feel comfortable...maybe it's just on the reporting--I'm thinking of APR checklists and things like that.

Time. Educators perceived they “needed more time--the time factor was a big part,” to implementing 2272. Finding time to meet the new legislation’s requirement to develop a comprehensive district-wide assessment system, including multiple measures of student achievement, was a challenge. A teacher elaborated on this barrier:

Scheduling enough time [is a barrier]. In a small school, for example, I coach, I’m the tech coordinator, I teach elementary computers, I drive bus every once in a while when they need help. You just wear so many hats in a small school that it seems like anytime this new legislation comes out you just feel like it’s one more thing to do.

Those in District C recognized the lack of time was a barrier to accomplishing what they believed could be significant work. One educator recognized what so many believe in that, “Truly wanting to make a change that makes a difference takes time.”

Implementation Supports

Three key supports to implementing House File 2272 were articulated by educators interviewed in District C: 1) district leadership, 2) the local Area Education Agency, and 3) professional development opportunities.

Leadership. Leadership in District C was perceived to have come from two sources: district administrators and the district’s internal Design Team. Educators in District C attributed significant implementation support to the “excellent leadership” provided by their administrators. Their commitment to keeping informed on the ever-changing requirements of the Accountability law, as well as their willingness to support teachers’ attendance at workshops and trainings related to 2272, was acknowledged by several teachers.

The district’s Design Team also played a significant role in supporting the implementation of 2272. A teacher explained, “We were led by the administration, and I

would hope that the rest of the staff would feel that the Design Team also played a leadership role.” The concept of the “Design Team” is described below:

Our leadership Design Team is made up of teachers, administrators and support staff [and it] really guides our school in developing our goals and creating our action plans. They have an active role in this process....

Widespread participation on the Design Team was the norm, and according to one teacher, “Everybody here, except for the new teachers, have been on the Design Team and they understand the role of the Design Team as it’s changed throughout the years.”

We actually took a look at our design team and [decided] we had to have an alignment where we had members that actually taught the subject areas that are affected most by the goals and call those “goal team members.” They then assign themselves to a goal--they signed up for it. Their role then is to first of all really look at the data that comes from our alternate assessments and also the ITBS and ITED. And really look at what we need to improve on--where’s the gaps. They’re the main people that actually develop the goal and follow through with the goal, through the action plan. They’re the ones that spearhead any staff development in the area through study teams, and attend functions in that goal specific area.

Area Education Agency support. When discussing implementation supports, staff members in District C noted that, “The AEA support was probably the biggest one.” As an administrator explained:

The way that I learned about 2272 was from the AEA. That was the year that they dedicated the full year at curriculum network for the process of planning for the CSIP--what this is going to look like, what should we be doing at this point throughout the year....We had many workshops that included DE reps and experts in the field; that’s how I learned about it and that’s how I prepared for it--relying heavily on the AEA....I think the districts in the area fared quite well in the CSIP plan that was submitted. For the most part, excluding maybe one or two districts, the rest of us heavily relied on what our AEA was looking at.

When discussing professional development opportunities, a teacher remarked that, “[Our AEA] is super-supportive and we’ve brought in [consultants] who trained the entire staff on Creating Readers.” Another said, “The AEA has been really good about

when we needed training in a certain area, at finding the people to do that. They always seemed very, very knowledgeable about what we needed to be trained in."

Professional development. Educators perceived that Implementing HF 2272 would have been impossible without professional development opportunities:

I'm really glad that we had the in-service opportunities that we did....We actually assessed papers for sample papers and then we would actually bring our student papers and we would sit down in teams of 4 and evaluate them. And try to see how close we were if we would be within a point.

Unintended Consequences

During the course of implementing Iowa's Accountability law, two unintended consequences emerged: 1) increased workload for teachers and administrators, and 2) increased stress level for teachers and administrators.

More work. Even though educators in District C perceived that they had a strong tradition of school improvement in place before 2272, that the law "wasn't a big shift in thinking," and that they were far "ahead" of other districts while beginning to implement 2272, they still agreed that there was a lot of work associated with the implementation. Perhaps the most telling explanation for this seeming paradox came from a school administrator who explained,

We didn't need an alternate assessment to know that they [kids] were really good at performing arts. You know your kids and you know their strengths and weaknesses; you put in those performance assessments....You have a lot more freedom with those kids. That's the beauty of a small school; the difference 2272 made for us is we had to write it down.

The increased workload, then, was perceived to be a result of the mandate's requirement to document what was already occurring in the district.

Educators seemed to understand the value of most of 2272's requirements and were willing to implement them. The challenge was to accomplish the work ahead of them within the short timeframe set forth in the legislation:

It seems that we get trained in all these things and we have these initiatives that we need to do, but then there's no real time to work on them. And I feel like it's getting worse and worse and worse as more state mandates come down the line. You know all in-services need to be directly addressing those benchmarks or standards and they do not include time in the classroom. And we find that very frustrating because you get all these good ideas and then the only time to do it is at home at night, and that's when you're correcting papers and writing lesson plans for the next week, and report cards, and....

Administrators' workloads were also impacted. Understanding and translating state requirements to communicate with staff involved attending numerous meetings to gather and sort through the information to make sense of it. The biggest addition to their already sizeable workload required gathering and formatting the data needed for reporting requirements: "It made me find a lot more information than I was used to getting...student achievement, standardized test scores, multiple assessments."

More stress. One source of the increased stress on teachers and administrators came from the additional work required to develop assessments for benchmarks though no more time was added to accomplish the tasks. An administrator commented: "It's getting to actually wear on people quite a bit," and a teacher lamented, "Oh, probably the stress level is higher."

However, the most significant cause of higher stress levels resulted from the concern teachers had about being blamed for student achievement results. Some even felt it could eventually cause educators to leave the profession, as this teacher described:

I think it's, it's also been very stressful for teachers. I don't know if they understand just how extremely stressful....Yeah, that [using achievement scores punitively] is a real frustration and that is going drive people out of education.

You know it drove a teacher, from fourth to third grade; the next step is just, "I don't need this, I'm out of here." You're going to publish my scores and say, "She's bad."

Recommendations to Policy Influentials

It didn't appear that educators in District C thought legislating state policy was easy. However, they did have three recommendations for policy influentials as they contemplate future legislation: 1) talk to us, 2) fund mandates, and 3) be critical of data.

Talk to us. Those interviewed in District C overwhelmingly wanted legislators to listen to educators and find out what really happens in schools:

What I would like to see is if they get this big idea to enact some educational legislation, they should take time and go to schools and visit with teachers and superintendents and maybe take some time to see what's going on in the classroom. Then go back and get together with their fellow legislators and brainstorm and say, "Hey, I've gone out, I've done some of the research, here's what I'm seeing."

An administrator remarked that educators and legislators should strive to work together:

I think as educators we have to understand we can't be perceived as whiners when change comes down the horn; we have to grab it by the horns and say, "Yeah, we can do this type of thing if this is here for us to build on." I think that's kind of the key, but I don't think you see that because most legislators vote party lines first of all, and when you look at them coming into the schools, it's really for a picture show and they're not really listening. They're looking at what ways that they can get some recognition....I think if legislators really did listen to the districts and the districts took it upon themselves to educate legislators at a different level than what has done in the past, I think this could actually be a team working together.

A teacher expressed his frustration with the lack of communication between schools and legislators:

Ask us. Put us on board. We've got people driving this legislation who are not educators and maybe have limited knowledge of what happens in our school districts. Our own legislators have not come here; they have not been in our

building. Talk to us. Invite us to discussion groups or panels. It's just frustrating that they don't come to us....Open up the communication.

Fund mandates. Not surprisingly, some of those interviewed suggested that the legislature put the money where the mandates are in order to support implementation at the local level:

Well, I don't know if they put as many resources into 2272 as they could've....If you're going to put that much extra work on people, and for a lot of districts it was a lot of extra work, but you know, even if it's an extended school year or whatever for faculty, there has to be some reward for doing all that extra work. So I would say...fund the mandates. You know it's easy to create mandates; it's very hard to fund them sometimes.

Another plea for funding came from a teacher with specific ideas about how those dollars could best be used in their school:

I think just providing funding for programs that we know work--that are research based. We try to put a real emphasis on what's research based here. We study everything really thoroughly....Give us the resources we need so that we can provide small group instruction, so that we can provide ESL aids--the Hispanic population needs some small group instruction. [Provide funding] so that we can provide after school assistance, so that we can provide summer school assistance, so that we can have staff development. Taking away our [Phase III] money so we no longer can have the after school study groups is not a positive thing.

In District C, their changing student population brought challenges in addition to raising reading, math and science achievement. With an increasing number of students not fluent in English, one teacher requested that funding be provided to support parents in learning to speak English to support their children. She told the heartbreaking story this way:

We take pride in our state, so why are we not leading the nation in our ESL instruction and in our ESL practices? I don't see us doing anything with our adults and if our students are going home and they're [parents are] not speaking English, then they're not going to improve. It's just so frustrating. I had a little girl call me last night; she asked, "How do you spell 'Halloween'?" She was writing a poem for me. She said, "Nobody in my house can speak English, so nobody can spell Halloween."

Be critical of data. Educators extended another recommendation to policy influentials: be critical of data collected from schools. While most believed schools should be accountable, they were most concerned that data taken out of context or used inappropriately to judge teacher or district effectiveness. One teacher's quote seemed to capture the thoughts of many of those interviewed in District C:

And when they look at our [ITBS/ITED] scores and say, "Oh, you're failing because your scores aren't high," there are just so many factors that play into that that our legislators are not considering. For instance, in my grade, I have a 26% Hispanic population that gives me as an instructor many new challenges that I didn't have eight years ago when we were a very WASP community. Don't take my scores that are now much lower than they were eight years ago and say, "Wow, I guess [she] isn't the teacher she used to be, and mark this as a failing school.... Scores are great if they drive instruction and you can use them to improve the curriculum and say, "Hey, these are weak areas." We need more time, more emphasis here, maybe different textbooks, different instruction, apply to different learning styles. But don't use them to close buildings and set my salary, because there are so many factors and I can't control who you bring to me. I have to educate them all.

While not everyone expressed the same frustration, one teacher in particular felt the focus on data had reduced her to more of a "bean counter" than a teacher. Another articulated the district's widely held belief that kids matter most when she said, "I think it's more important to us that we don't have failing kids than that we're not a failing school."

Finally, many educators in District C recommended that legislators and policy influentials put student achievement scores into context and "be more supportive of those [low scoring] districts. Look at why those scores are not maybe what they should be or where they want them to be." Teachers and administrators believed that providing support for struggling districts would lead to more improvement than labeling schools as ineffective and threatening them with bad publicity.

Cross-site Analysis and Discussion

Each rural K-12 school district involved in this study, and indeed each of the 371 school districts in Iowa, exists within unique contexts that evolve through the presence of unique people, environments, and situations. With that understanding, no attempt was made by the researcher to generalize the findings from these three contexts; the beauty of qualitative research is that generalization is not the goal. In this case, the purpose of the qualitative methodology was to tell each district's story—to share their policy implementation experiences at the district, building, and classroom levels.

In addition to resisting generalization, it was crucial to the descriptive nature of this study to avoid making comparisons between districts or judging the success of their implementation efforts. Using this filter to appreciate the findings from each district, the following emerge as significant areas from Districts A, B, and C.

Community Engagement

House File 2272 did not change the level of community engagement in these districts—it already existed and was unchanged by this legislative mandate. In each case, educators were acutely aware of the value and importance of involving and informing community members, and they did so in a variety of ways. Not only were there active school-community committees in place to promote the exchange of information and ideas between them, additional mechanisms such as focus groups, surveys, and community meetings were used to gather input and feedback while strengthening relationships with patrons. Districts A, B, and C also reported a wealth of information to them on a regular basis before 2272 required it. Whether that information was printed in newspapers, brochures, or calendars or shared at drop-in coffee sessions, local service clubs, or parent-

teacher conferences, each district knew how to communicate with patrons, and they did so frequently.

If the theory of action behind 2272 was that public reporting would make stakeholders uncomfortable with low performance and provide pressure to do better (DeBray, Parson & Woodworth, 2001), that did not occur in the districts studied. Margaret Goertz (in Fuhrman, 2001) describes reporting information to the public as "the most basic form of accountability. Schools give an account of their programs and performance. The public can then use this information to demand improvements in schools" (p. 44). Using this definition, all three districts were already being accountable to their patrons before 2272 was enacted, and most educators said they have always been and always will be accountable each and every day to their local school board, students, and parents.

Policy Intent

Educators in all three sites believed the Iowa legislature enacted HF 2272 as a way to improve schools by making them more accountable for student achievement. In most instances, increasing student achievement equated to raising standardized test scores, which would help Iowa maintain its reputation for excellence in education. The resulting accountability system in Iowa was presumably designed to meet this expectation. Accounting, then, is a means to protect citizens against the flaws of public agents while allowing citizens to maintain control through systems of accountability, which extend the checks and balances that exist among the branches of government. Accountability links democracy and bureaucracy by authorizing and limiting the

discretion and actions of public agents and checking their exercise of power (Adams & Kirst, 1999).

The educators interviewed perceived Iowa legislators may have had good intentions and may have anticipated that 2272 would improve schools. However, "Accountability assumes that people know the source of problems and how to fix them" (Adams & Kirst, 1999, p. 477). As Elmore (2002a) indicates, legislation that doesn't come with capacity building supports can only measure the results of the system; it does not provide the means to improve it:

Accountability systems do not produce performance; they mobilize incentives, engagement, agency, and capacity that produces performance. Accountability systems do not, for the most part, reflect any systematic coordination of capacity and accountability, nor do they reflect any clear understanding of what capacities are required to meet expectations for performance and where the responsibility for enhancing those capacities lies. A more specific and coherent theory of action for accountability systems would help....Whose responsibility is it to assure that these conditions are met? If it is that state that initiates the accountability requirement, then it is the state's responsibility to assure that the capacities are in place to meet those requirements. (p.13)

According to McLaughlin (1987), "Motivated professionals, we have seen, generally make every effort to do their job well" (p. 174). Unfortunately, if those professionals don't have the knowledge or skill to implement a policy, mandating that it occur is futile. Policy that does not increase capacity then serves to increase the gap between effective and ineffective schools, and may even lead low capacity schools to respond by "gaming" the system (Elmore, 2002a, p. 9). Though Iowa doesn't currently have explicit "high-stakes" assessment, "school improvement" is largely measured by increasing ITBS/ITED scores. Elmore's (2002b) point is cogent:

Test-based accountability without substantial investments in internal accountability and instructional improvement is unlikely to elicit better performance from low-performing students and schools. Furthermore, the

increased pressure of test-based accountability alone is likely to aggravate the existing inequalities between low-performing and high-performing schools and students. Most high-performing schools simply reflect the social capital of their students, rather than the internal capacity of the schools themselves. Most low-performing schools cannot rely on the social capital of their students and families and instead must rely on their organizational capacity. With little or no investment in capacity, low-performing schools get worse relative to high-performing schools. (p.37)

Understanding how these untested accountability systems are supposed to improve academic achievement in schools is a complex endeavor:

In an ideal system, performance-based accountability focuses educational policy, administration, and practice directly on teaching and learning. Accountability accomplishes this alignment, in principle, by defining goals, allocating authority, managing incentives, building capacity, measuring progress, reporting results, and enforcing consequences, all related to student performance. As such, educational accountability represents not only a movement to improve student achievement but also as a mechanism to secure the relationship between public schools and their communities, grounding their relationship in explicit expectations and demonstrated performance as the basis of public support. (Adams & Kirst, 1999, p.464)

In addition to making schools accountable in Iowa, educators in Districts A, B, and C felt legislators may have passed 2272 as a response to accountability demands from the federal Department of Education. In order to collect and aggregate student achievement information that would force educators to be accountable while also meeting federal requirements, educators understood that 2272 created a common mechanism to do so. The mechanism created was the Annual Progress Report (aka "the checklist"), which required local districts to publicly report specific, standardized pieces of information to their communities and the Iowa Department of Education each year. Adams and Kirst (1999) proposed that the theory of action underlying performance reporting is to stimulate improvement in weaker schools and districts through reporting and comparison between them. There was some feeling among educators in this study that that was one

legislative intent, as well as identifying ineffective schools, but that sentiment was not universally recognized.

Increased Data Use

The educators interviewed indicated that House File 2272 caused their districts to increase the use of Annual Progress Report data at the building and district levels. That data included disaggregated standardized, norm-referenced test scores in reading, math and science; locally-developed multiple measure assessment scores in reading and math; and data on "state indicators" such as drop-out rates, percentage of students scoring at or above 20 on the ACT, and the percentage of students completing a "core program" of study at the high school level, to name a few. Teachers and administrators in all districts felt they were not only collecting more data for the APR, most felt they were making more conscious use of the data than they had been prior to the legislation.

Whether that conscious use of data made any difference in school improvement efforts was not the focus of this study. However, it is important to note that while data based decision-making has gained a central role in policymaking, its effects are largely unknown (Massell, 2001). As Elmore and Rothman note, "The theory of action of the standards-based reform model suggests that, armed with data on how students perform against standards, schools will make the instructional changes needed to improve performance" (Massell, 2001, p.148). However, Massell (2001) states "The evidence of problems does not automatically express what one must do about them" (p.167), and she suggests a limitation of the theory: "Performance data are often not transparent and readily understandable [and] educators often do not have the prerequisite knowledge and skills to translate them" (DeBray, et al., 2001, p. 187). Regarding the use of data, DeBray

et al. (2001) found “those who were doing well before reinvested and those low performers fit a pattern of ‘compliance without capacity’” (p. 187). Finally, if student achievement or other improvement data does not increase over time, it can erode educators’ sense of self-efficacy. When data fail to improve it can “perpetuate a cycle of even lower expectations,” reinforcing blame and increasing feelings of helplessness (DeBray et al., 2001, p. 190).

Assessment Development

House File 2272 caused districts to develop a more formal, comprehensive assessment system including multiple measures of student achievement on standards, particularly in reading and math (a multiple measure of science achievement was not required until 2003). In order to accomplish that task, professional development was arranged to assist teachers in identifying and understanding the characteristics of quality reading and math assessments and student responses to them. After aligning the multiple assessment measures to their benchmarks and administering them to students, educators learned to increase their inter-rater reliability when scoring them. Creating and scoring these locally developed measures of achievement was an intense, time-consuming process, but most educators supported this approach to district-wide assessment. Because these classroom assessment results could be aggregated and used in conjunction with district curricula to inform instruction, this process was seen as more valuable than administering an additional off-the-shelf standardized, norm-referenced measure.

In these districts, the development of the required multiple measures was seen as a “supplement” to the direction they were already heading. Because several teachers had been using the Math Exemplars and the Creating Readers frameworks as instructional

tools in their classrooms prior to 2272, extending their use as district wide assessment measures wasn't a "huge shift in thinking" for them. Each district's choice to use these frameworks as instructional tools seemed to encourage and support their extended use in a more comprehensive assessment system. This is consistent with Firestone's (1989) observation that "when key decision makers in a district have a propensity to act in a certain direction and see the policy as contributing to their own goals, they will implement it aggressively" (p. 134).

Sirotnik (2002) suggests, "Assessment systems are about creating and using ways to collect information on teaching and learning and about making appraisals or judgments based on that information. Accountability systems are about what is done with these appraisals" (p. 665). Because those interviewed in Districts A, B, and C perceived the ITBS/ITED did not "cover" their entire set of standards and benchmarks, they recognized the need to develop additional assessments to collect information on what students knew and were able to do. While HF 2272 admittedly "pushed [them] a little faster," by creating these multiple reading and math assessment measures, they were hoping to inform classroom instruction while simultaneously complying with the legislation.

Implementation Barriers

Over 25 years ago, Wildavsky and Majone (1977) said that planning models recognize policies fail due to inadequate design, but they "do not recognize the important point that many—perhaps most—constraints remain hidden in the planning stage and are only discovered in the implementation process" (p. 106). During the implementation of Iowa's accountability law, educators discovered that the lack of time, unclear policy expectations, and the nature of the external state mandate constrained their ability to

implement it. Educators in each of the three interview sites frequently identified lack of time as the main barrier in implementing the requirements of HF 2272. On the surface, it seemed contrary to find that educators believed 2272 “supplemented” what they were already doing, yet they did not have enough time to meet some requirements of the new policy. In fact, there were “pockets” of teachers already using high quality multiple measures of student achievement and utilizing the process of data-driven decision-making in their individual classrooms. An important question for these districts is as Fairman and Firestone (2001) suggest: “the question is whether districts and states can muster the will and capacity to support teacher learning on a more intense level to expand standards-based teaching beyond the pockets where it occurs anyway” (p.144).

To those interviewed, it seemed that the mandated requirements for multiple assessments were natural next steps in the development of a standards-based reform model. However, even though they recognized that personnel at the Iowa Department of Education were learning as they went, it was little comfort to local educators when short implementation timelines loomed on the horizon, and no more time was available during the school year to do the work. Though Crandal, et al. (1986) observation is over 15 years old, its relevance was unmistakable for the districts studied: “planning for, implementing, and institutionalizing a significant change usually consumes an inordinate amount of time. School people are already busy and rarely in a position to delegate or drop some of their responsibilities while they take on new ones” (p. 42). Cohen and Hill (2001) also note “reformers have to work within the existing system, but that system is often a powerful threat to reform” (p. 155).

While district leadership did their best to provide as much time as possible to implement 2272, the common feeling was that they could always use more of it to deepen the quality of their work. McLaughlin (1998) acknowledges that teachers must have the “opportunity to talk together, understand each others’ practice, and move as a community to visions of practice....If teachers are not learning together, reflecting together, examining student work together, changes in governmental structures...will likely mean little in terms of student outcomes” (p. 81). Though districts were heading in the direction of developing a more formal, comprehensive district-wide assessment system and they had pieces in place, it was not a reality before 2272, and creating it took a great deal of time. As Sirotnik (2002) cautions:

Although there may be political urgency to produce quick results, meaningful change comes only from well-developed, deeply integrated social, political, and economic changes generally, as well as concomitant specific educational changes in resource allocation, curriculum, instruction, and organizational structures in schools. All of this takes time, a lot of time. Responsible accountability systems will require a long-term focus. (p. 668)

Unclear and frequently changing expectations regarding policy requirements were also seen as a barrier to implementing Iowa’s Accountability law. Educators were frustrated with rules that kept changing and were inconsistently interpreted by state officials. Identified as a common barrier in the literature, interpreting policy is a challenge for the system: “even the best planned, best supported, and most promising policy initiatives depend on what happens as individuals throughout the policy system interpret and act on them” (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 172). More recently, Cohen and Hill (2001) recognized uneven policy implementation occurs because “variation in the way policy reaches the schools, other agencies and providers of professional development...encourage variation in responses to policy” (p. 174).

Participants in this study also identified the nature of the external mandate as a barrier to its implementation. By their very nature, “mandates use coercion to affect performance” (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, p. 139), and being required by policy makers outside the local context to implement such an extensive state policy felt like coercion to many educators interviewed. While they tried to make the best of it and moved forward with implementation, they sometimes questioned their own motivations and wondered how to fully engage staff in the reform efforts. These districts prided themselves on being high quality, student-centered schools, and they were not completely convinced that mandating improvement would cause it to happen state-wide. Similarly, Timar and Kirp (1987) observe, “Excellence cannot be coerced or mandated. Rather, it is a condition to which individuals may aspire” (p. 309). Thomas Kelly (1999) cites Deming’s belief that if you want to improve the product (student achievement), you must ask, not tell, the workers (teachers and administrators) how to do it. This must be a standing question so improvement can be a continuous process. Kelly (1999) asserts

Excellence is the habit of self-improvement.... The same is true for organizations. No external force can make an organization excellent. Organizational excellence is a function of leadership, not authority. And the role of leadership is to persuade an organization’s members to commit themselves to becoming excellent. (p. 544)

Over 15 years ago McLaughlin (1987) recognized that legislators have a difficult time controlling quality: “policy makers can’t mandate what matters...policy...depends on local capacity and will. Capacity is something that a policy can address....Will reflects an implementer’s assessment of the value of the policy” (p. 172). While most educators generally supported the intent of 2272, the legislation itself did not address capacity. However, the three districts studied had supports that assisted them in their implementation efforts.

Implementation Supports

A supportive Area Education Agency and a strong district culture that included the belief in frequent, high quality professional development, involving staff members in school improvement planning, and distributed district leadership assisted these rural districts in implementing 2272. Educators in each district acknowledged their common AEA helped establish a foundation for school improvement processes prior to 2272. Led by their AEA, districts wrote improvement plans that centered on developing “an engaging curriculum in a caring community” for student and adult learners. With that backdrop, districts adopted an action research model for individual classroom and district improvement. Teachers and administrators alike commented that utilizing these concepts and processes before the accountability law was passed allowed them to move forward more easily with the requirements of the new legislation.

District educators also appreciated the extensive role AEA consultants played in delivering the professional development opportunities that supported their ability to implement the required multiple measures of student achievement. Those efforts focused on building the capacity of teachers by increasing their knowledge and skill, specifically around designing and using high quality classroom assessment methods. As regional service agencies, by definition, AEAs pool resources to support small districts, and this AEA did just that. Hannaway and Kimball (2001) also found this type of assistance a necessity: “the findings draw attention to the special challenges of reform faced by small districts and call for targeted assistance to these districts to pool resources and acquire specialized help when needed” (p. 120).

All three districts identified professional development as an essential component for implementing 2272. Fuhrman (2001a) suggests that policy makers realize that “accountability is not enough—it must be accompanied by capacity-building, including high quality intensive professional development” (p. 277). Professional development in these districts included selecting content standards and benchmarks (though much of that had been done prior to 2272), and intense training in Creating Readers and Math Exemplars was essential for developing and using multiple measures of achievement in reading and math. Each district provided this training to staff members because they realized, as did Cohen and Hill (2001) in the central finding of their 10-year study, that reform had “some success, but only when teachers had significant opportunities to learn” (p. 2). As in that study, two sources of teacher learning in Districts A, B, and C included professional development activities and assessments to learn how to assess and to learn how students responded (Cohen and Hill, 2001).

Finally, the educators interviewed cited strong leadership from administrators and their Design Team as a support to their ability to respond to the state mandate. In all three districts, an internal Design Team was utilized as the central school improvement planning and decision-making body. Designed to promote broad-based involvement in school improvement, the Design Team was credited by many as an important vehicle for making any advances in the district, including implementing 2272.

Administrative leadership was also key in implementing 2272. They took a proactive stance and consciously decided to make 2272 work for their district. As reported in Fairman and Firestone (2001), “Rosenblum and Louis found that superintendent support was a key predictor of successful implementation” (p. 134).

Superintendents and principals alike understood that their response to 2272 would influence the staff's attitude toward implementation, and their approach was to align their current school improvement efforts with the new requirements of HF 2272.

As far back as 1985, Schein noted: "In fact, there is a possibility...that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is create and manage culture" (Astuto & Clark, 1986, p. 61). This was never more true than in Districts A, B, and C. The administrators tended to be optimistic and tried to keep the focus on what was best for the kids, as opposed to how to best achieve compliance. This is consistent with Astuto and Clark's (1986) observation:

When managers focus on accountability they miss opportunities to foster the real source of the productivity gains—the people. Fostering a sense of individual efficacy and esprit de corps places the people, the key actors, in a pre-eminent position and sets the stage for them to invest their energies and skills in the organization....The necessary strategy for managers is to provide the occasion, the mechanisms, and the conditions for members of their organization to contribute and to increase their capacity to contribute. (pp. 65-66)

Though unclear expectations may have frustrated administrators at times during implementation, for the most part, they supported the intent of the law and believed they could use it to encourage positive change in their district.

Administrators were also the central interpreters and disseminators of the state policy requirements to staff members. While many received information directly from the Iowa Department of Education, administrators clarified their understanding of much of it through AEA meetings with consultants and by networking with administrators from other districts. The result of this local interpretation is described in the literature:

At each point in the policy process, a policy is transformed as individuals interpret and respond to it. What actually is delivered or provided under the aegis of a policy depends finally on the individual at the end of the line, or the "street level bureaucrat." (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 174)

Unintended Consequences

Unintended consequences of implementing 2272 included increased educator workloads, increased educator stress levels, and a sense of losing local control. Though all three districts were considered “active” and had strong foundations for school improvement, that didn’t exempt them from doing the work of developing and scoring district-wide multiple measures of student assessment and collecting, disaggregating, and reporting student assessment results. Educators believed the paperwork and documentation of assessment efforts associated with publicly reporting so many disaggregated subgroup populations seemed a bit much, even for those who supported the intent. They were not convinced their publics actually wanted that much information in that specified format and were skeptical about the value of extensive reporting.

Increased educator stress levels resulted from two main sources: trying to accomplish the increased workload in the same amount of time and wondering what might be done with assessment results. While professional development time was refocused on implementing 2272, no additional days were added to the school calendar to do the work, and no other tasks were omitted to make time to do the work. This lack of time was discussed earlier as a barrier to policy implementation.

Another source of stress was thinking about punitive measures commonly associated with standards-based reform efforts. While 2272 made no explicit mention of sanctions or rewards, educators were clearly concerned that scores might be used inappropriately to determine school or teacher effectiveness in the future. Educators and non-educators alike might shrug off the unintended consequence of increased stress levels as common to many work environments. However, the issue is not whether

increased stress levels are common but whether they facilitate or hinder school improvement efforts. While some may contend that an optimal “level of concern” is necessary to motivate people to improve, Schwarzer and Greenglass (as cited in van den Berg, 2002) argue successful change is not predicated on stress but rather on sufficient levels of teacher efficacy, which can influence processes of school development.

Elmore (2002a) identifies issues that concern teachers as they consider the potential uses of accountability data:

When judgments about the effectiveness of teaching are based on student performance at a single point in time, these judgments send very mixed signals to individual teachers, and cloud the relationship between the student’s learning and the teacher’s sense of efficacy. What exactly is the teacher responsible for? ...the student’s performance at a given moment? ...the learning that the teacher adds to the student’s performance as a consequence of their interaction? ...or some compound of the two? If the teacher is not responsible for the learning of the student that occurs, or doesn’t, before the student arrives in her classroom, who is? Holding prior teachers responsible for current levels of learning has value possibly for the present students of those teachers, but no value at all for the student in her present circumstances, since she can’t recoup learning that failed to occur in the past. (p. 7)

As a way to think about teachers’ work, Apple developed the *intensification thesis* (as cited in van den Berg, 2002), and later Hargeaves (as cited in van den Berg, 2002) described “job intensification” as the large-scale redefinition of teachers’ roles and expectations. Both men assert that increased governmental and societal pressure on schools and teachers to be publicly responsible for their work is changing their working conditions. As governmental expectations, policy implementation requiring increased accountability is considerably changing teachers’ work as they are confronted by a diversity of demands, expectations and desires that may not be in agreement with one another. According to Leithwood and Jantzi (as cited in van den Berg, 2002), in addition to unclear expectations, an overemphasis on student achievement and a lack of trust in

teachers as professionals can lead to further job intensification (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999).

Along with other factors not discussed here, job intensification can cause teachers to experience stress and burnout. Research by Schaufeli, Daamen, and van Mierlo (1994) and de Heus and Diekstra (1999) indicated teacher burnout was especially caused by having less control over the investment of time in their work, less participation in the decision making of the school, and less support from colleagues (van den Berg, 2002). More recently, a survey of 114 credentialed California teachers conducted by Barbara Benham Tye and Lisa O'Brien (2002) found increased accountability (high stakes testing, test preparation, and standards) was the number one reason for leaving education given by teachers who had already left the profession. Accountability was also given as the third highest reason current teachers said they would consider leaving the profession (p. 27). Increased paperwork and additional nonteaching demands were ranked second by both groups as reasons for leaving the profession (p. 28).

Several educators were also deeply concerned about the seeming erosion of local responsibility and control of educating their communities' children. Teachers openly questioned how state-level bureaucrats could possibly assume to know what was best for each local district to assess and report to its community. In reality, "Political interactions often shape what (or whose) knowledge is privileged" (Malen, 1998, p. 180), and this was certainly the case as 2272 identified reading, math, and science as such.

Whether they meant to or not, including those three academic subjects in Iowa's accountability law was a strong signal from legislators that their achievement should be the purpose of schools. While local educators also believed in the importance of those

subjects, by mandating achievement be reported using a nationally norm-referenced, standardized measure (ITBS/ITED), the focus on those results was also given political privilege to the exclusion of other, locally important purposes and measures of schooling. As Sirotnik (2002) observes, "There is much more to life in such complex organizations as schools than can be indicated by mandated, point-in-time measurements" (p. 666). Requiring public reporting of these subject-specific scores may also lead to a narrowed focus on what gets emphasized in school curricula:

Only the subjects tested—and only the limited ways in which these subjects are tested—receive the bulk of attention, much to the detriment of other valued goals and pedagogical practices. Study after study and poll after poll suggest that parents want much more for their children than what can be assessed by a few tests." (Sirotnik, 2002, p. 666)

Given its strongly held tradition of local control, educators questioned the authority and the wisdom of enacting the state mandate. For these districts, McDonnell's description is an accurate one: "Policy implementation may be difficult when a governmental initiative fundamentally challenges traditional norms of who governs schools" (Odden, 1991, p. 11). The literature also supports participants' views that reform is best carried out at the local level. In a report by the Committee for Economic Development, the affirmation of local control is treated as central to the reform itself:

Our recommendations are grounded in the belief that reform is most needed where learning takes place—in the individual schools, in the classroom, and in the interaction between teachers and student. As businessmen worldwide have learned, problems can be best solved at the lowest level of operation. (Timar & Kirp, 1987, p. 309)

Some educators believed the intent of 2272 was not only to improve schools but also to simultaneously respond to compliance demands from the federal Department of Education. In this case, policy influentials may have used 2272 to keep as much local

district control as possible given the environment of increased national accountability. If this were so, educators' concerns seemed legitimate, as "What was politically essential for survival was ideologically at odds with what it claimed to stand for" (Ellis, 2000, p. 128).

Recommendations

Educators in every district and practically every interview recommended that those most affected by policy decisions should be involved in making them. They felt as if state policy had been made for them rather than with them and their professional judgment had been superceded by politicians. To avoid this situation in the future and to increase the success of subsequent implementation efforts, teachers and administrators overwhelmingly recommended that legislators talk with and involve educators in decisions that affect them.

Educators also recommended that mandates be funded to support their implementation. Allocating resources not only allows capacity building to occur, it clearly signals that legislators believe in the importance of the legislation. Without financial support and the subsequent ability to increase educator knowledge and skill, districts are left to meet new, higher expectations without the means to achieve them.

Finally, educators cautioned legislators to use the data from Iowa school districts carefully. They warn, as does Sirotnik (2002) that "Ultimately, educators should know more about any given child than any test can tell us" (p. 669). Beverly Falk also underscores the appropriate use of assessment results:

At their best, assessment tools give teachers an ongoing way to track student progress and respond to individual learning needs in a timely manner. At their worst, they devalue teacher intuition if scores and numbers produced by a computer push out professional judgment. (Falk, 2002)

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This policy implementation study was conducted in three small K-12 Iowa school districts to describe and analyze what implementers understood as the intent, as well as the processes and strategies used by these public schools to implement this state policy. The first section of this chapter presents a summary of the study and related findings, followed by the conclusions and implications of the findings. The chapter ends with recommendations for policy makers and further research in this area.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative policy implementation study was to describe processes and strategies used by three rural K-12 school districts to implement Iowa's Accountability for Student Learning Act (House File 2272), enacted in 1998. Additionally, the researcher sought to analyze what implementers understood as the intent of HF 2272 while seeking their recommendations for improved design of future educational policy. Findings of this study should be of interest to K-12 administrators, teachers, school board members, and other policy influentials throughout the state and nation as it reveals attitudes, knowledge, skills, and processes useful in future implementation of state policy. It should be of particular interest to legislators in considering the design of future education policy with implementation in mind. This study was one of seven conducted through Drake University and was supported by a FINE Foundation grant.

Due to the nature of the research questions posed in this study, a qualitative methodology was most appropriate for exploring the issues involved. In this project, one-

on-one interviews with 29 teachers and administrators were conducted, field notes were written, and districts' Comprehensive School Improvement Plans, Annual Progress Reports, building improvement plans, and the districts' websites were utilized to provide primarily descriptive data. Using participants' own words and describing the context and process of their small district implementation efforts supported and necessitated a qualitative approach.

While it was not the intent of the researcher to evaluate success, judge, or rank school districts in their policy implementation efforts, rationale was needed to determine which districts would be included in this study. The following criteria were used to determine potential district site selection: 1) total K-12 student enrollment less than 750, 2) little administrative turnover since the beginning of the implementation process, 3) districts actively implementing the mandates, and 4) districts located in north central Iowa.

These districts were selected because they were considered to be actively implementing the mandate, and the educators interviewed were considered to be "knowledge elites" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In 1989, William Firestone first identified "active user districts" as those who latched on to new state initiatives and went beyond them (Odden, 1991, p. 10). Because it was more likely that thoughtful practitioners were leading educational change in active user districts, small north central Iowa districts were sought whose implementation of policy mandates had been actively occurring.

In-depth, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher and served as the primary data source for this study. An interview protocol developed by

Lindaman (2002) and Wulf (2002) was utilized to address the following research questions:

1. How did House File 2272 impact three small, rural Iowa districts?
2. What did local implementers describe as supports and barriers to implementing House File 2272?
3. What did local implementers think that the legislature intended for House File 2272 to accomplish?
4. What do educators in small districts offer as recommendations for future policy design and implementation procedures?

In this study, interview data were transcribed, preliminary coding schemes were developed, and the constant comparative method was used to categorize data. Data were then analyzed in two ways. First, data from each site were analyzed individually as one data set, and a site report was written for each district. Second, the researcher looked across the site reports for emergent themes.

Findings from across the three interview sites included the following: 1) Though HF 2272 may have been intended to promote community engagement, the state policy did not promote or inhibit the level of community engagement in place prior to its passage, 2) Educators believed the intent of House File 2272 was to improve schools by making them more accountable for student achievement, 3) House File 2272 caused districts to increase the use of Annual Progress Report data at the building and district levels, 4) House File 2272 caused districts to develop more formal comprehensive assessment systems which included multiple measures of students achievement, 5) Barriers to implementation included lack of time, unclear policy expectations, and the

nature of the external mandate, 6) Implementation supports included the local AEA and a culture that believed in professional development and distributed leadership, 7) Unintended consequences included increased educator workloads, increased stress, and a sense of losing local control, and 8) Educators recommended that policy makers listen to and involve those most affected by the policy decisions.

Discussion of these findings included a consideration of the literature on accountability, standards-based reform, and policy implementation. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future policy implementation efforts were also included.

Conclusions

While the job of the qualitative researcher is to describe truth as those studied perceive it, it is also a privilege of the researcher to draw some conclusions about how he or she views it. After coming to an understanding of the experiences of those involved in this study and considering the literature on accountability, standards-based reform, and policy implementation, this researcher has drawn some of her own conclusions:

1. Districts that were actively engaged in school improvement developed an infrastructure that was crucial in their early efforts to implement 2272. That infrastructure included distributed leadership, focused, frequent professional development on quality classroom assessment, an action research-oriented improvement process, and a culture that fostered positive student and staff relationships.
2. While deliberate use of data is central to school improvement, voluminous public reporting does not increase community engagement, involvement, or feedback.

Educators can collect and make purposeful *internal* use of required Annual Progress Report data and use it as the district's accountability to the state, but external reporting does not affect positive change in district-community relations.

3. Improving student achievement was an admirable legislative intent, but consideration of implementation was seriously lacking. Districts needed substantial support in the form of 1) clearer, more consistent expectations for implementation, 2) professional development to build capacity to implement the legislation, and 3) realistic time lines to support quality implementation.
4. For these active districts, their intermediate service agency (Area Education Agency) was crucial in developing their capacity to implement 2272.
5. Even though some legislative requirements in 2272 were seen by active districts as focusing their improvement efforts, implementation was an intense, stressful, and not always productive process. Achieving compliance not only included doing the work locally, it included the time-consuming task of keeping a paper trail documenting the district's efforts while also reporting information on the Annual Progress Report's checklist to the Iowa Department of Education and their local communities.

Implications

The implications that follow cannot be fully demonstrated from the findings of this study. Rather, they represent the researcher's reflections on the combination of the study's conclusions, the current literature base, and personal experiences.

1. These "active districts" drew heavily on their existing infrastructure to implement 2272. That certainly begs the question about what happens in "less active"

districts. It seems likely that districts with the leadership to mobilize resources and build capacity will do so, while those without that ability will be forced to “game” the system to seek compliance rather than improvement, simply because they have no other options. Without capacity building on a broad scale and the local leadership to embrace it, the rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer.

2. A shift to increased state control is an ominous sign of conflict between state policy on one hand and values, local control, and educational excellence on the other. If the latter values reinforce one another and lead to their mutual benefit (Johnston & Liggett, 2002), how will increased state legislation and the corresponding decrease in local control affect education in Iowa?
3. Assessment or no assessment is not the issue; these Iowa educators are troubled about how narrowly students are being assessed. Test scores in mandated areas are beginning to define the meaning of an educated person. Requiring more sophisticated use of assessment data is a good thing, but telling districts what to assess and report isn't. By requiring the reporting of norm-referenced standardized test scores, the legislature has placed those quantitative measures in a privileged political position. Because what gets reported gets taught, teaching and learning will be narrowed to focus on those areas.
4. Decisions made at the state level are beginning to erode the local decision-making ability of school districts. While few might disagree with the value of focusing on reading, math, and science, choosing that emphasis should ultimately be a local decision, based on community values. If Iowa truly wants districts to maintain local educational control, legislators cannot tell districts what's important to them.

Additionally, it is *already* the responsibility of local school boards to keep its people and the system accountable and to ensure their public agents are meeting community expectations. State legislation oversteps that authority. If legislators do not believe local school boards have the capacity to hold schools accountable, they should enhance it.

5. The use of data has been approached as a technical task; it is that, but it is only the first step in a chain of interpretation, planning, and action that will improve schools. If schools and districts lack the capacity to institute changes indicated by systemic data, educators may understand what needs to be done but be unable to carry out the necessary steps to make it happen.
6. The nature of a mandate assumes educators are not and will not fulfill their professional responsibilities without external pressure. That assumption itself can hamper implementation efforts. If legislators are not careful, they may "produce the sort of subjects that its plans had assumed at the outset" (Scott, 1998, p. 349).
7. Effective, equitable, and flexible policy is difficult to design, but each district has its own unique history, culture, current capacity and will. Good policy design recognizes and builds on the strengths of each local implementing context.
8. One unintended consequence of large-scale policy implementation is likely to be increased educator stress and disillusionment with the profession. Implementing state policy successfully is only possible with the input, assistance, and commitment to the changes by those who must implement it. At a time when recruiting and retaining quality, thoughtful educators is essential for students and the profession, the increasing paperwork and documentation burdens, increasing

yet unsupportive accountability pressures, and increasing de-professionalization by outsiders jeopardizes alienating the very people upon whom education depends.

9. If community members are the recipients of required annual school improvement progress data that they find unimportant, overwhelming or technical in nature, districts will not capitalize on the potential benefits of community reporting. While the state requires that numerous pieces of specific information be reported, the essential yet overlooked questions are, "What is important to our local community? What do they want to know?"

Recommendations to Legislators and Policy Influentials

In no particular order of importance, the following represent the researcher's recommendations to legislators and policy influentials:

1. Support Iowa's Area Education Agencies. The ability of AEAs to build capacity in districts across the state is one of Iowa's strongest assets.
2. Design flexible policy. In order to utilize the strengths of each implementing context, policy must allow, support and encourage discretion and decision-making at the local level. If necessary, mandate the process *or* the product, but not both.
3. Build the capacity of teachers, administrators, and school boards. Districts would improve if they knew what to do and had the means to do it. Assuming teachers and administrators know what to do to increase achievement but just aren't doing it is implausible (Elmore, 2002a).

4. Learn about the variety of policy instruments available to legislators. Recognize assumptions inherent in using mandates as a policy mechanism, and think about the long-term effects of those instruments rather than short-term political benefits.
5. Involve educators in decisions that affect them. If you want to know how to improve the system and understand what is feasible, ask those it depends upon. Local educators could provide a reality check while identifying what it would take to implement the policy. Let educators speak truth to power (Wildavsky, 1979).

Recommendations for Further Research

This study attempted to describe the processes and strategies used by three small, rural school districts to implement a state accountability policy in education; it did not attempt to determine the success of those implementation efforts. However, enough time has passed since the enactment of 2272 that further research could be conducted to more specifically identify the degree that successful implementation was achieved by these and other Iowa school districts.

Additionally, it may prove useful to examine the implementation efforts of less active districts to understand how differences in context can affect local implementation. While it would be an interesting study, difficulties in identifying "less active" districts would need to be overcome, however.

Finally, if the legislative intent behind House File 2272 was to improve student achievement through accountability measures, further research could determine if Iowa achievement had improved in the three areas targeted by the legislation. By looking at ITBS and ITED scores over time, perhaps there would be some change in student

performance that could indicate implementing 2272 did in fact result in improved student achievement.

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APPENDIX A. HOUSE FILE 2272

HF 2272

PAG LIN

HOUSE FILE 2272

1 1
 1 2
 1 3 AN ACT
 1 4 REQUIRING THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ADOPT RULES
 1 5 RELATING TO THE INCORPORATION OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR
 1 6 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT INTO THE EDUCATION STANDARDS AND
 1 7 ACCREDITATION PROCESS.
 1 8
 1 9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:
 1 10
 1 11 Section 1. Section 256.7, Code 1997, is amended by adding
 1 12 the following new subsection:
 1 13 NEW SUBSECTION. 21. Develop and adopt rules by July 1,
 1 14 1999, incorporating accountability for student achievement
 1 15 into the standards and accreditation process described in
 1 16 section 256.11. The rules shall provide for all of the
 1 17 following:
 1 18 a. Requirements that all school districts and accredited
 1 19 nonpublic schools develop, implement, and file with the
 1 20 department a comprehensive school improvement plan that
 1 21 includes, but is not limited to, demonstrated school,
 1 22 parental, and community involvement in assessing educational
 1 23 needs, establishing local education standards and student
 1 24 achievement levels, and, as applicable, the consolidation of
 1 25 federal and state planning, goal-setting, and reporting
 1 26 requirements.
 1 27 b. A set of core academic indicators in mathematics and
 1 28 reading in grades four, eight, and eleven, a set of core
 1 29 academic indicators in science in grades eight and eleven, and
 1 30 another set of core indicators that includes, but is not
 1 31 limited to, graduation rate, postsecondary education, and
 1 32 successful employment in Iowa. Annually, the department shall
 1 33 report state data for each indicator in the condition of
 1 34 education report.
 1 35 c. A requirement that all school districts and accredited
 2 1 nonpublic schools annually report to the department and the
 2 2 local community the district-wide progress made in attaining
 2 3 student achievement goals on the academic and other core
 2 4 indicators and the district-wide progress made in attaining
 2 5 locally established student learning goals. The school
 2 6 districts and accredited nonpublic schools shall demonstrate
 2 7 the use of multiple assessment measures in determining student
 2 8 achievement levels. The school districts and accredited
 2 9 nonpublic schools may report on other locally determined
 2 10 factors influencing student achievement. The school districts
 2 11 and accredited nonpublic schools shall also report to the
 2 12 local community their results by individual attendance center.
 2 13
 2 14
 2 15
 2 16 RON J. CORBETT
 2 17 Speaker of the House
 2 18
 2 19
 2 20
 2 21 MARY E. KRAMER
 2 22 President of the Senate
 2 23
 2 24 I hereby certify that this bill originated in the House and
 2 25 is known as House File 2272, Seventy-seventh General Assembly.
 2 26
 2 27
 2 28
 2 29 ELIZABETH ISAACSON
 2 30 Chief Clerk of the House
 2 31 Approved _____, 1998
 2 32
 2 33
 2 34
 2 35 TERRY E. BRANSTAD
 3 1 Governor

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

HF2272 Implementation Study - Interview Protocol *Teacher Version*

From what you know, what are school improvement mandates (2272) intended to do?

- How did you learn about the school improvement mandates (2272), at first and as it unfolded?
- Tell me about any ways that you think the district is really different as a result of the school improvement process.
 - How has your district's plan impacted your role as a teacher?
 - Would you say your school is more capable and willing to take on new changes in the future?

Do you feel you had the necessary resources and skills to implement your district's goals?

- What did your district do to help you and/or others develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed?
 - Were these pretty much in place prior to school improvement mandates or were they more a result of the mandates?
- Do you feel that your school provided the necessary resources such as time, money, expertise to implement school improvement mandates?
 - Were these pretty much in place prior to school improvement mandates or were they more a result of the mandates?
- Do you feel school improvement mandates served to "jump start" your district's reform efforts or did it supplement what you were already doing?
 - Did school improvement mandates divert time and resources from other reform efforts going on in the district before they were passed?

Share with me the process your district utilized to implement school improvement mandates.

- What were some of the supports to the implementation process?
 - Were these pretty much in place prior to school improvement mandates or were they more a result of the mandates?
- What were some of the barriers to the implementation process?
 - Are these much the same barriers both before and after the mandates?
- What might you suggest to do differently the next time around?

Why do you think the legislature enacted school improvement mandates?

- What do you think they saw as the need?
- Do you think they are getting what they hoped for?
- From your experience with the school improvement process, what do you recommend to legislators about how to make legislation helpful to districts?
 - What would you recommend to legislators in future implementation efforts?

HF2272 Implementation Study - Interview Protocol
Administrator Version

From what you know, what was HF 2272 intended to do?

- How did you learn about 2272, at first and as it unfolded?
- Tell me about any ways that you think the district is really different as a result of 2272.
 - How has your district's plan impacted your role as an administrator?
 - Would you say your district is more capable and willing to take on new changes in the future?

Do you feel your staff had the necessary resources and skills to implement your district's goals?

- What did your district do to help you and/or others develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed?
 - Were these pretty much in place prior to 2272 or were they more a result of 2272?
- Do you feel that your school provided the necessary resources such as time, money, expertise to implement 2272?
 - Were these pretty much in place prior to 2272 or were they more a result of 2272?
- Do you feel HF2272 served to "jump start" your district's reform efforts or did it supplement what you were already doing?
 - Did 2272 divert time and resources from other reform efforts going on in the district before it was passed?

Share with me the process your district utilized to implement HF 2272.

- What were some of the supports to the implementation process?
 - Were these pretty much in place prior to 2272 or were they more a result of 2272?
- What were some of the barriers to the implementation process?
 - Are these much the same barriers both before and after 2272?
- What might you suggest to do differently the next time around?

Why do you think the legislature enacted HF 2272?

- What do you think they saw as the need?
- Do you think they are getting what they hoped for?
- From your experience with 2272, what do you recommend to legislators about how to make legislation helpful to districts?
 - What would you recommend to legislators in future implementation efforts?

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEWEE CONSENT FORM

Interviewee Consent Form

Research Study: Implementing State Educational Policy in Iowa: Voices from the Field

The purpose of this funded research study is to study the process of school transformation in Iowa by conducting a policy implementation study of Iowa's comprehensive school improvement and accountability mandate. In its simplest form this research project asks two questions: 1) How is Iowa's mandate for school improvement actually working? 2) How could it be redesigned to work better? A research team is interviewing approximately 180 people, including state legislators, teachers, administrators, and state and local policy makers who have been identified as the people best able to respond to these questions.

The interviews are approximately 45 minutes in length and are being conducted in the fall of 2001 through the summer of 2002. The findings of the study will be made public; however, your name and position will not be used and the data will not be reported in any way that you can be identified. Your signature indicates you understand the purpose and process of the study and that you give us permission to use the information in disseminating the results.

Please be aware that your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to decide not to participate or withdraw at any time without repercussion. If you have any questions regarding the study or participation in it, please feel free to contact us at the number listed below. Also we will be happy to share our finding from the study when it is completed.

Date: _____

Interviewee Name (please print): _____

Interviewee Position (please print): _____

Interviewee Signature: _____

Research Team: Dr. Perry Johnston, Tom Lane, Dr. Annette Liggett, Jennifer Lindaman, Leslie Moore, Jody Ratigan, Carole Richardson, Dr. Kim Thuente, and Denny Wulf

Research Team Member Signature: _____

Drake University Phone Number: (515) 271-3719